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Alasdair A. MacDonald

Airy Nothings

Imagining the Otherworld of Faerie from the
Middle Ages to the Age of Reason

Essays in Honour of Alasdair A. MacDonald

Edited by

Karin E. Olsen and Jan R. Veenstra



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Cover illustration: Walpurgisnacht, a scene from a nineteenth-century edition of Goethe's *Faust* (München, c. 1875), illustrated by August von Kreling (1819–1876). Faust is fascinated by some of the female apparitions; one, Mephistopheles explains, is a Medusa, another is Lilith, Adam's first wife. (Image from a private collection)

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INTRODUCTION

Jan R. Veenstra and Karin Olsen

In the intellectual tradition of the Latin West, the invisible world of supernatural agency was dominated for a long time by angels, demons and disembodied souls. The spirits of woods, fields, mountains, rivers and lakes, the little folk from fairy stories, the familiar spirits of witchcraft lore and the ghostly inhabitants of the four elements were deprived of the intellectual standing that their angelic superiors demanded for themselves, and they were frequently dismissed as demonic quirks or childish superstitions. Even though their presence in folklore and literature testified to a lasting interest in the minds and imagination of authors and readers from the Middle Ages to the present day, it was not until the sixteenth century that their status as objects of intellectual inquiry and speculation began to gain prominence.

The first author to give them a non-demonic place in the order of creation was Paracelsus whose *Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis et salamandris* (posthumously published in 1566) legitimised the elemental spirits, or *Geistmenschen* as he called them, as forces inherent in nature much in the lines of the secret virtues of plants and herbs and stones, placed there by the creator for the benefit of mankind as restorative powers or objects of marvel. The Swiss doctor approached them with the eyes of the empiricist, even though he believed their visible manifestation relied on divine revelation, and treated them as further evidence of nature's plenitude and as a scientific reminder of the Aristotelian precept that nature abhors a vacuum. Paracelsus was in fact the first to give elemental spirits a local habitation and a name in a scientific world picture.

The impact of this work, however, was slight and mainly limited to the field of natural magic where practical metaphysics bonded with ceremonial heterodoxy. Paracelsus' intellectual apology of elemental spirits strangely coincided with empirical innovations in science and a renewed interest in the spirits of nature on the part of poets and playwrights. The treatise entered an intellectual scene where science was about to discredit all supernatural agency and where the otherworld of magic and spirits took refuge in the theatre of fairy queens and airy nothings. Far from being a capitulation, this escape into the world of the imagination was in

fact quite the reverse—at least for some thinkers. Paracelsus himself had made a strong case for the power of the imagination, one of man's faculties that was deemed capable of exerting influence on the physical world. He strongly believed in a process of natural causation whereby morose imaginings can spread the plague faster than infected air, and whereby a mother's phantasies profoundly affect her foetus. The same level of reality can be attributed to the spirits who found a bedding in the heated imagination of poets, and for some early-modern minds the fairy instruments of Prospero's potent art were to be taken very seriously. For more than a century Paracelsus' spirits could thrive in the world of magic and the world of art where the boundaries between fiction and reality were seriously blurred.

Early-modern sceptics and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century enlightened rationalists would eventually banish all spirits to fictional afterlives, removing them once and for all from a thoroughly mechanized universe. For natural spirits like the ones that had only recently been rehabilitated by Paracelsus, this meant a return to an already familiar condition. Geoffrey Chaucer at the beginning of his *Wife of Bath's Tale* had relegated the fairy court to 'th'olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour' when the land was full of 'fayerye'.¹ He was convinced that nowadays there were no fairies left since they had all been replaced by wandering monks. Duke Theseus in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* (from around 1596) was even less generous in his beliefs stating that fairies were wrought by the seething brains of lovers and lunatics and that the poet's pen could give 'to airy nothing a local habitation and a name'. His disbelief was checked, however, by his betrothed Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, who realized that more than 'fancy's images' are required to transfigure the minds of the Athenian lovers; and that these fruits of fancy can easily grow to 'something of great constancy'.² Of course, in terms of Shakespeare's self-conscious artistry this could well refer to the imaginary world of the stage made real in terms of a Paracelsian theory of the imagination. For the artist, art is a means of creating reality. It is interesting to note, however, that Shakespeare in this well-known scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* genders the dichotomy between reason and fancy using a strong theory of imagination to allow the Amazonian Queen, who was

¹ *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, 1987), p. 116 (D 857–59).

² *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 5.1, in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. S. Wells and G. Taylor (Oxford, 2005), pp. 418–19.

wooded by the sword and hence lost a battle, gain access to or at least acknowledge an Otherworld where the Fairy Queen Titania had waged and lost a similar battle. Shakespeare's play gives literary expression not only to the world of faerie but also to a belief that was intellectually vindicated in a previous century by Paracelsus and would at the very end of the seventeenth century find support from Episcopalian minister Robert Kirk, whose *Secret Commonwealth of Fairies* (1691) served similar aims as the *Liber de nympphis*. Though the minister and the alchemist were not the most representative minds of their respective ages, they do signal that airy nothings floated freely between reason and fancy.

The present book brings together in a collection of essays some of the main chapters from the history and tradition of otherworldly spirits and fairies in the literature of the British Isles and Northern Europe. It does so by organising them in four distinct thematic groups that represent some of the main issues and problems posed by the scholarly and artistic confrontation with the Otherworld, most notably the interaction between reason and imagination. The first thematic group comprising the two opening contributions of this volume, focuses on the role and importance of the imagination as a means of recreating otherworldly perceptions. It is followed by five chapters which deal with the Otherworld in medieval folklore and literature, and which range from a discussion of older Germanic, Irish and English sources to an analysis of a representative theological source in Latin. A third group of essays investigates the shifting frames of perception and linguistic labels that show the hybridity and ultimate redundancy of European perceptions of the Otherworld as it is finally obfuscated by the clarity of an enlightened age. The concluding set of essays, finally, examines the artistic and literary afterlives of otherworldly creatures who, failing to sustain their intellectual recognition as genuine physical or metaphysical entities, succeed in living happily ever after in the literary imagination.

The imagination held an ambiguous position in early-modern thought depending on whether or not it was capable of affecting the outside world. Next to being a mental faculty for receiving and recreating perceptual images and sense data, there were also compelling arguments to attribute to it an executive force to perform feats of miracle and magic. The ambiguity manifested itself in the supposed reality of natural and ceremonial magic and the make-belief of theatrical performance. The close ties that existed between magic and the theatre are illustrated by the volume's opening chapter on 'Marlowe's Ghost' and *The Second Report of Doctor John Faustus*. In this essay, Robert Maslen discusses the *Second Report* in

the context of the literary production and revival of Marlowe's plays in the late nineties of the sixteenth century. At that time Marlowe and a fellow-playwright, Robert Greene—both known for their supposed atheism—had very interesting literary afterlives in which the souls of the deceased were imagined to play significant otherworldly roles. Greene was imagined (by author Barnaby Rich) to bring news from heaven and hell, and Christopher Marlowe, who had made an English tragic hero of the German magician Faustus, returned as a spectral presence in the anonymous *Second Report* from 1594 in which the German necromancers Faustus and his pupil Wagner along with their familiars join forces with the armies of Christendom to battle the Turks. The magic of the stage is portrayed as the product of the imagination in the sense of a harmless imaginary force to aid the cause of Christianity and to delight the lovers of the theatre. Yet it succeeds in doing so by referring to another imaginative force, the power of the magician that is believed to affect the real outside world. The theatre of Marlowe and Shakespeare reminds its audience in an ambiguous way how imagination holds sway over the spirits of the Otherworld.

The most celebrated magician in English literature is Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and it is well known that Faustus in a way is partly modelled on the renaissance humanist and magus Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim. In a contribution on 'Rhetorical Play in Cornelius Agrippa', John Flood analyses the arguments and the rhetoric of an early feminist treatise by Agrippa. Focusing more on the imagination than on otherworldly spirits, the essay demonstrates the level of epistemic variance that Agrippa could conjure up and that he deemed legitimate. A man of considerable learning, Agrippa had a versatile mind writing both a notorious work on occult philosophy and an equally famous treatise on the vanity and uncertainty of knowledge and science. His name is also attached, however, to this protofeminist discourse, entitled a *Declamation on the nobility and pre-eminence of the female sex* which was written to attract the patronage of Margaret of Austria. A quest for intellectual truth that is both informed by an interest in magic and by profound scepticism must automatically result in a form of fideism well suited to a Christian cabalist (Agrippa was familiar with Reuchlin) as well as to a person of high imagination who would value rhetoric as a kind of epistemology. Flood discusses the arguments for woman's superiority in Agrippa's *Declamation* precisely in this light. Several of Agrippa's arguments are quite imaginative. Whereas Adam was created in the field among the brutes, Eve was created in Paradise with the angels; whereas man was created from the clay of the

earth, woman was created by God from the purified material of Adam's rib. According to an allegorical reading of the Genesis story, Eve, unaware of the divine prohibition was seduced by rational argument and hence becomes the universal temptress representing reason, whereas Adam stands for superior faith. In its varied array of arguments, the *Declamation* is intellectually promiscuous, Flood concludes, but in the context of Agrippa's other works, one should not look upon this as a weakness but rather as a strength. The nobility of woman gains rhetorical and imaginative momentum, thereby acquiring serious validity. Agrippa's protofeminist defense is more than a rhetorical exercise in the modern sense of the word since he aims to articulate a level of reality where a male dominated world can become aware of the nobility of woman that it would otherwise not have realized.

By analogy this argument of Agrippa's, or rather the confidence that the magus placed in rhetoric's truth and fancy's force, could with equal justice be applied to otherworldly perceptions, as was done in fact by Paracelsus and Queen Hippolyta in Shakespeare's play. This confidence of the Amazonian Queen is strikingly matched by her prowess in battle, another non-standard theme that was, however, articulated in some of the older European literature even though the nobility and bravery of women on the whole was not an acknowledged fact. Tette Hofstra has provided an example of this in a contribution on sword-wielding women in Old English, Old Norse and Middle High German literature. Occasionally women are seen to take up the sword, thereby compromising a cultural taboo in a masculine warrior society, but usually their efforts are futile and unsuccessful. This is quite contrary to the bravery of, for example, the biblical Judith who kills Holofernes with a sword, for the greater good and glory of God and his people. Yet, the Old English poem that tells us of this feat refers to her as *ælfscinu* 'elf-bright'.³ The otherworldly dimension of Judith's masculine act is matched by the observations of warrior queen Hippolyta, and though Hippolyta is wooed by Theseus's sword as if to restore a male dominated order, her nuptials unleash an unparalleled encounter with the fairy world.

This sense of otherworldliness and feminine power was never absent from the literary imagination. One of the first contributions in this volume

³ *Judith*, line 14a, in *Beowulf and Judith*, ed. Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, ASPR 4 (New York, 1953), p. 98.

to bring this out is Karin Olsen's chapter on 'Female Voices from the Otherworld'. An important problem in the study of older Irish literature, and, within the scope of the present volume, especially the literature that deals with depictions of the Otherworld, is the extent to which Christian perceptions and frames of reference influenced or even determined these depictions. The Otherworld of Irish literature has for that reason a dual character since it displays the metaphysical perceptions of two distinct mindsets, that of the indigenous beliefs and that of the new faith, Christianity. The Irish looked upon their land and sovereignty as feminine, and to secure a prosperous rule, the monarch had to court and wed a sovereignty goddess, thereby establishing a matrimonial connection with the Otherworld. In her contribution, Olsen explores the ambiguous status of the female characters from the fairy world in a number of Irish adventure stories (*echtraí*). One such story is 'The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn' (*Serglige Con Culainn*) where the traditional exploits of the hero in the Otherworld are in part revisioned from a Christian perspective. Not only is the otherworldly experience of the hero denounced as demonic illusion at the end of the tale, also the depiction of the sovereignty goddess is merged with that of a mortal woman and—in line with patriarchal order—a docile wife. Even the Otherworld itself is turned into a metaphor for Paradise in the *Echtrae Chonnlaí*. This literary repositioning of otherworldly feminines never quite succeeded in diminishing their power. The world of fairy was a real and important presence in the medieval poetic imagination and the magic that ruled it was sometimes distinctly a woman's. Morgan le Fay is a case in point.

In a contribution on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Richard North provides an extensive discussion of the scenes at the Pennine castle and the Green Chapel, home of the Green Knight, in the light of an elaborate otherworldly illusion engineered by Morgan le Fay. Sir Gawain, compelled by the beheading game at Camelot to set out on his quest to the Green Chapel one year later, sojourns at the castle of Sir Bertilak where he hopes to join in the celebration of mass and matins, but where—on the contrary—he suffers temptation at the hands of Sir Bertilak's wife. Both the castle and the chapel are not what they seem (the Green Chapel is a fairy mound and quite the inverse of a Christian chapel, and the liturgical celebrations at the Pennine castle, significantly, do not include Childermas). They are clearly manifestations of the same illusion that began with the arrival of the Green Knight at Arthur's court. The Christian moral lesson of the romance hence derives from Gawain's confrontation with the illusory and deceptive world of faerie where, so reader and knight errant

are told at the end of the romance, Morgan le Fay, who is both Gawain's aunt and King Arthur's half-sister, holds sway.

The world or court of faerie would, from a Christian perspective, be considered illusory, but in literary representations one can find it brought to life and recognize the distinct contours of a pagan Otherworld. In his contribution on Cresseid and the man in the moon, David Parkinson discusses the significance of the image of the full moon as a churlish man carrying a stolen bundle of thorns on his back in Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*. In this poem, the heroine suffers the fate of being cast from her lofty station into the marginal existence of a leper, spotted like the full moon. While her fate is dictated by the fickle influence of the celestial body to whose sphere Dante assigned the souls of the inconstant, Cresseid feels barred from the greater perfections of heavenly bliss and hopes her soul may find solace in the wandering court of Diana.

Christian perceptions of the afterlife did much to suppress this pagan world of folklore, and the essay that concludes the second part of the collection appropriately discusses how the demonic was represented in monsters and spirits that had previously populated the world of pagan beliefs. In the Middle Ages folk belief was predominantly informed and conditioned by sermons and lay instruction. Christian doctrine was communicated to the masses through elaborate (and mainly liturgical) text-and-image programs. The thirteenth-century *Bible moralisée* and *Biblia pauperum* are telling instances of the popularisation of Christian typology which helped explain the world in terms of biblical types and antitypes. In his contribution on the *Concordantie Caritatis* of Ulrich von Lilienfeld (from the mid-fourteenth century), Rudolf Suntrup deals with one such lavishly illustrated typological work compiled for the benefit of preaching and private meditation. A remarkable characteristic of the book is its emphasis on antitypes. Evidently Ulrich believed Salvation history was best explained with a special focus on the counterparts of the almighty God. By demonstrating the innate evil and hostility of this world, the preacher could by contrast impress upon his hearers the bliss and blessings of heaven. The devil, demons and personified sins appear in typological representations of the natural world—in animals, in monsters, in the spirits of nature. As medieval taxonomy of the natural world lacked clear (and empirically verified) definitions, nature encompassed a wide array of real and imagined creatures.

This taxonomical instability was not limited to natural philosophy. In fact, the boundaries between pagan and Christian perceptions of the Otherworld were also quite permeable and gave way to all sorts of hybrids.

The third part of this collection consists of two contributions dealing with this indeterminacy and the way in which elite culture affected and further eroded fairy beliefs. Generally speaking, elite culture imposed itself in two distinct ways; on the one hand Christian culture demonized and thereby hybridized the world of faerie, on the other hand rationalist culture made it obsolete.

In his contribution on fairies in the folk beliefs of early modern Scotland, Julian Goodare is mainly concerned with the indeterminate boundaries of the fairy realm which he explores by comparing fairy beliefs with other manifestations of the Otherworld, namely angels, demons, saints, spirits and witches. He argues that these boundaries are by no means clear and that folk perceptions were quite susceptible to elite assumptions or the interference of other popular apparitions from the spirit realm. This is particularly true of the spirits of the dead, or ghosts, who on the one hand can be clearly distinguished from fairies, but who, on the other, frequently functioned as spirit-guides to the living and could dwell among the fairies. Angels and saints are not easily associated with fairies in Scottish folk beliefs, as occasionally they are seen at opposite ends when saints are invoked to remedy the ills perpetrated by fairies. Yet on the whole folk beliefs are obfuscated by pneumatological or cosmological notions of elite culture which habitually contaminate the sources. Robert Kirk, for instance, believed that fairies are an order of the angels, and Andrew Man envisaged a cosmos with elves, ghosts and an angel named Christsonday. One of the interesting conclusions that Goodare draws from his analysis of the source-material is that the more trustworthy sources on fairies are not literary compositions or antiquarian collections, but the materials of witchcraft trials, mainly because the 'elite did not believe in fairies, and had no reason to slant a witch's confessions' (p. 172). The essence of folk belief in fairies is its indeterminacy.

Spirit-lore in the broadest sense of the word, but more specifically the belief in witchcraft, demons, and fairies, fell subject to considerable criticism, scepticism and even disbelief in the periods of the Reformation and Enlightenment. Much of the spirit-world became obsolete and, hounded from the world of reason and science, found refuge in the world of imagination, fiction and nursery-rhymes. In his contribution on the 'Bull-begger', Henk Dragstra deals with one particular victim of this process of scepticism and rationalisation. Under the influence of authors like Reginald Scot and Samuel Harsnett (critics of witch-beliefs and popish superstitions) many creatures from folklore were denounced as superstitious inventions

and ended up as scare-words used to frighten (and subdue) children. In a detailed source-study (including plays, chapbooks and dictionaries) Dragstra traces the origin of the scare-word 'Bull-begger' to conclude that what in the early modern period would have been looked upon in terms of free-floating intelligences ended up in modern times as floating signifiers in the works of lexicographers who were chiefly concerned with meaning rather than substance.

The evacuation of the world of faerie in the age of Enlightenment had much to do with the fact that the imagination lost its magic touch. Nature is not what we imagine it to be even though imagination remains a crucial tool for the inquisitive and explorative mind. The only reality that the imagination can conjure up is the 'great constancy' of make-belief. The fourth and final part of this volume comprises two contributions dedicated to the glorious career of fairy creatures in the artistic and literary imagination. This afterlife of the little folk did come at a price, however, as their continued existence was now inextricably entwined with politics and satire in the world of man.

In a contribution on 'Satyres and Faeries in Ben Jonson's *Oberon*', Helen Wilcox draws the reader's attention to the fact that, especially in dramatic performances and stage productions, the world of faerie could be used as a mirror image of the real world and society. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was performed on the occasion of a courtly wedding and its comical transgressions and subversions not only give way to the reestablishment of patriarchal authority but also reconcile all conflicting parties in a general atmosphere of love and peace. Ben Jonson's *Oberon, The Faery Prince*, which was performed on New Year's Day, 1611, in the presence of James I of England and which in no small measure owed its theme and central character to Shakespeare's play of over a decade earlier, conveys a similar message of peace and reconciliation. In her contribution on Ben Jonson's masque, Wilcox explains how the hierarchy of imaginary creatures, notably the satyrs, sylvans, elves, fairies and fays, represents the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland that are brought together in harmony under the rule of James and his allegorical representative in the masque, Oberon, who now is not portrayed as a king but as a prince. The role of Oberon on New Year's Day 1611 was played by Henry, the Prince of Wales and son of James, who embodied the hope of a prosperous future, and who in language covertly reflecting the relationships at court was depicted as the secondary light of the moon outshining the greater light of the Sun.

The volume concludes with a contribution by Jan Veenstra on the fairy spirits in Alexander Pope's mock epic *The Rape of the Lock*. Written for the purpose of reconciling two rivalling families, Pope's satire on social etiquette developed into a five canto mock epic echoing Milton's *Paradise Lost* and bringing back to life the ancient 'machinery' of pagan deities that he had culled from the pages of a recent English translation of Montfaucon de Villars's *Comte de Gabalis*, a work—so Pope believed—of the Rosicrucian philosophy. The spirit world of the Count of Gabalis, however, did not spring from the mind of Christian Rosenkreutz but from that of Paracelsus who was Villars' main source. *Le Comte de Gabalis* became a great literary success and inspired many authors to elaborate not only on the doctrines from Paracelsus' treatise *De nymphis*, but more specifically on Villars' own cabalistic fantasy of the conjugal commerce between humans and elemental spirits that had such time-honoured precedents in the sovereignty goddesses of Irish literature, in Morgan le Fay, and even in Queen Titania who fell for Bottom in Shakespeare's comedy. Pope's *Rape of the Lock* was one of several memorable literary afterlives of the Paracelsian elementals.

The world of faerie, remote but potentially real in the pre-modern era, gained prominence through a process of rationalization that, in the end, would be the cause of its undoing. The intellectual scrutiny that gave to the spirits an acknowledged place in nature by making them causal agents of natural processes, eventually denied them legitimacy and probability with the mechanization of the world picture. Their afterlives were facilitated by the minds of Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson or Pope. Queen Hippolyta's 'thing of great constancy' was not the work of alchemists or theologians but of poets.

ALASDAIR MACDONALD:
IN PRAISE OF VERSATILITY

If any single word is to describe the academic career of Alasdair A. MacDonald (b. 1946), it is 'versatility'. His many publications in the field of English and Scottish Literature from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, his wide range of teaching experience, and his active involvement in internationally acclaimed research projects have made Professor MacDonald a truly distinguished scholar and teacher who has always been able to inspire colleagues and students alike. The following few paragraphs are written in appreciation of his academic achievements, which have left such a mark in medieval and early modern scholarship.

Professor MacDonald studied English Language and Literature at the University of Edinburgh. He received his MA in 1968 and completed his doctoral dissertation entitled 'The Middle Scots Religious Lyrics' ten years later. Since then, he has published articles and edited books on many topics pertaining to medieval and early modern Europe, although the literature of the British Isles, both medieval and post-medieval, has continued to be the main focus of his research.

Before he was awarded his PhD degree, MacDonald had already worked as Lecturer in English at the University of Leeds (1972–74) and at the University of Ghana (1974–79). On returning to Scotland, he was appointed as a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh (1979–80). In 1980 he accepted an appointment as Senior Lecturer in English at the Catholic University (now the Radboud University) of Nijmegen, the Netherlands. In 1985 he was appointed by Royal Decree Professor of English Language and Literature of the Middle Ages at the University of Groningen, also in the Netherlands, and he took up his duties there formally in 1986; in the following year he was additionally appointed Professor of Old Germanic at the same university. He held both positions until his retirement in early 2011.

Alasdair MacDonald has been a member of several research committees in the Netherlands. From its creation in 1992, he was one of the leaders of the Groningen interdisciplinary Humanities research institute COMERS (Classical, Oriental, Medieval and Renaissance Studies). In January 1994 he was appointed the first Academic Director of the Netherlands Research School for Medieval Studies, a post which he held till September 1999.

In this capacity, as well as coordinating a very wide range of medieval studies in all the Dutch universities, he was responsible for establishing and facilitating formalised research links with several distinguished centres of medieval studies in other countries. National collaboration and international outreach have always been high among his priorities. He launched the Groningen 'Germania Latina' conferences, which have resulted in a series of book-publications dealing with aspects of the interface between Old Germanic and medieval Latin Christian culture. He initiated a fruitful ten-year cooperation between specialists in the Middle Ages and the early modern period, at the universities of Groningen and Münster. He devised the programme of the inter-faculty research project 'Cultural Change: Dynamics and Diagnosis', which was awarded a significant funding grant. Indeed, the theme of 'Cultural Change' has now become firmly established as one of the initiatives that have contributed to the profile of Humanities research at Groningen. To date, some forty-five volumes, dealing with a wide range of issues, affecting several selected historical periods of great change, have been published in the series 'Groningen Studies in Cultural Change'; Professor MacDonald was the co-editor of several of these. Moreover, he was from 1994–2001 the General Editor of the book series 'Mediaevalia Groningana', and he has been directly involved in the editing of several volumes. He remains an active member of the Editorial Boards of the two series, *Mediaevalia Groningana* and the *Groningen Studies in Cultural Change*.

In addition to his many research commitments in the Netherlands, Alasdair MacDonald never missed an opportunity to promote the study of Older Scots language and literature. He has been vice-president of the Scottish Text Society since 1998 and is a member of various advisory boards, such as those of the interdisciplinary project 'History of the Book in Scotland', the Scottish National Dictionary Association, and 'Musica Scotica'—the latter being dedicated to the publication of the medieval and early modern music of that country. In 2002, together with his Groningen colleague Dr Kees Dekker, he organised at Rolduc Abbey (Netherlands) the 10th International Conference on Scottish Language and Literature, Medieval and Renaissance, and in 2010, together with Professor David Parkinson of the University of Saskatchewan, he organised the international conference 'New Departures in the (Literary) Culture of the Reign of James VI and I', held at Groningen. Professor MacDonald was appointed Senior Professorial Research Fellow at the University of Glasgow in 2009. He continues to be involved with various research projects,

and he considers himself privileged to be asked to advise on the research projects of a number of younger scholars.

Alasdair MacDonald once remarked that during his long career as a teacher he had taught everything from *Beowulf* to Virginia Woolf. As a researcher he has not been less versatile. The bibliography compiled by Professor Luuk Houwen speaks for itself,¹ and it is rumoured that several additional publications are in the offing. MacDonald's width of research interests, which extend far beyond the literature of medieval and early modern England and Scotland, and which he has always been happy to share in his office, at conferences and in the classroom, have made him a respected scholar and teacher. When among his friends and colleagues the plan emerged to compile a celebratory volume of essays in his honour, it soon became clear that the diversity of scholarly expertise that he not only embodied but also entertained among his colleagues could not be properly represented in one thematic volume. Hence tasks and contributors were distributed evenly over what in the end turned out to be two celebratory volumes, each dedicated to a specific topic. Last year Professor Houwen published *Literature and Religion in Late Medieval and Early Modern Scotland*, and this year the present editors lay before their readers *Airy Nothings: Imagining the Otherworld of Faerie from the Middle Ages to the Age of Reason* as a tribute to Alasdair's versatility.

¹ *Literature and Religion in Late Medieval and Early Modern Scotland: Essays in Honour of Alasdair A. MacDonald*, ed. Luuk Houwen (Leuven, 2012), pp. xxi–xxx.

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MARLOWE'S GHOST:
THE SECOND REPORT OF DOCTOR JOHN FAUSTUS

Robert W. Maslen

1. *Afterlives in Fact and Fiction*

Our story begins with two bad deaths. In September 1592 the poet, author and playwright Robert Greene succumbed to a sickness brought on by a surfeit of pickled herrings and Rhenish wine—or so his enemy Gabriel Harvey asserted. Eight months later, in May 1593, the poet and playwright Christopher Marlowe was murdered by Ingram Frizer at a boarding house in Deptford, stabbed through the eye in a quarrel over a bill or 'reckoning'. Greene and Marlowe were hostile to each other; Greene, at least, did his best to make them so. But they had much in common, from their relatively humble origins to a university education and a life of mixing with, but never quite profiting by, some of the most powerful men and women in England.¹ They shared, too, a fascination with magic, metamorphoses and desire, as well as a mutual obsession with bad death and the possibility of averting it or putting it off. And immediately after Marlowe's death their fates became entwined to an extent that neither could have predicted. From tellers of stories they found themselves transformed into the stories' protagonists, and their ghosts continued to haunt the stage, the bookstalls and the streets of late Elizabethan London as if linked in a diabolic pact. This essay concerns the ghost of Marlowe; but ghosts are notoriously difficult to see clearly, and Greene's frequent and prominent posthumous appearances will help bring Marlowe's more elusive spirit into better focus.

The details of Greene's afterlife have long been familiar to us.² Besides the posthumous, quasi-autobiographical pamphlets attributed to Greene himself, such as *The Repentance of Robert Greene* and *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (both 1592), he returns from the grave in *Greene's News Both from*

¹ See Park Honan, *Christopher Marlowe: Poet and Spy* (Oxford, 2005), and Lori Humphrey Newcomb, 'Robert Greene', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11418>, accessed 2.8.2011).

² See e.g. Lori Humphrey Newcomb, 'Ghosts', *Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England* (New York, 2002), pp. 70–76.

Heaven and Hell (1593), by Barnaby Rich, which contains tales purportedly collected by Greene's spirit on a trip to Purgatory; Henry Chettle's *Kind-Heart's Dream* (1593), where Greene's ghost urges the satirist Thomas Nashe to avenge him on his detractor, Harvey; and John Dickenson's *Greene in Conceit, New Raised from His Grave to Write the Tragic History of Valeria* (1598), whose title page shows him vigorously scribbling fiction in his grave-clothes. Until recently, by contrast, the afterlife of Marlowe has been confined to some passing allusions, such as Peele's proto-Dickensian reference to him as 'Marley, the Muses darling for thy verse, / Fit to write passions for the souls below, / If any wretched souls in passion speak' in his poem *The Honour of the Garter*, published only a month after his death;³ William Webbe's critical assessment of him in 1598 as 'our best for Tragedie'; and Nashe's eulogy in *Lenten Stuff* (1599), where he is a 'rarer muse' than the mythic poet Musaeus, whose tale of Hero and Leander he made his own.⁴ On the stage, of course, he lived on in his plays, and could be said to have gone on writing well into the seventeenth century, as new scenes for *Doctor Faustus* kept appearing as if by magic in new productions of the tragedy.⁵ In this essay, however, I shall suggest that Marlowe's ghost also achieved a substantial presence (so to speak) on paper, in the form of an anonymous narrative printed less than a year after his murder, *The Second Report of Doctor John Faustus* (1594).⁶ The publication of this pamphlet coincided with a revival of his most popular plays on the London stage.⁷ It would seem that some of the details in it got mixed up with the theatrical legends surrounding his most scandalous play, *Doctor Faustus*, so that boundaries between truth and fiction, the theatre and the written page became blurred in a way that the author of the *Second Report* would no doubt have found deeply satisfying.

To return for a while, though, to the relationship between Greene and Marlowe, the story of their lifetime enmity comes to us largely through Greene's references to it in print. Soon after the success of Marlowe's first play for the public theatre, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587), and the failure of Greene's clumsy imitation of it, *Alphonsus King of Aragon*,

³ *The Works of George Peele*, ed. A. H. Bullen (London, 1888), 2.320.

⁴ For literary responses to Marlowe's death, see Honan, *Christopher Marlowe* (see above, n. 1), pp. 355–67.

⁵ See David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, eds., *Doctor Faustus: A- and B-Texts*, The Revels Plays (Manchester and New York, 1993), 'The B-text', pp. 72–77. All references to *Doctor Faustus* are to this edition.

⁶ STC 10715; 2nd ed. STC 10715.3 (online available through EEBO).

⁷ See Honan, *Christopher Marlowe*, p. 361.

Greene inaugurated what was to become a familiar rumour concerning Marlowe: that he shared his Scythian hero's contempt for religion—that Tamburlaine was, in fact, an avatar of Marlowe himself. In the epistle to his romance *Perimedes the Blacksmith* (1588) Greene refers bitterly to two gentleman poets who had scoffed at *Alphonsus* because

I could not make my verses jet upon the stage in tragicall buskins [...] daring God out of heaven with that Atheist *Tamburlan*, or blaspheming with the mad preest of the sonne [i.e. Giordano Bruno]; but let me rather openly pocket up the Asse at *Diogenes* hand [i.e. ignore the scholars' insults] then wantonlye set out such impious instances of intolerable poetrie[.]⁸ Such mad and scoffing poets, that have propheticall spirits, as bred of *Merlins* race, if there be anye in England that set the end of scollarisme in an English blanck verse, I thinke either it is the humor of a novice that tickles them with self-love, or to much frequenting the hot house...⁹

The reference to 'Merlins race' here alongside Tamburlaine identifies one of Greene's targets as Marlowe, who was known in his Cambridge days as Marlen,¹⁰ a name that links him with the Arthurian prophet-magician—an apt connection for the playwright who dramatized the life of Faustus. Prophets had as bad a press as atheists in Tudor times—all the major insurrections in *The Mirror for Magistrates*, for instance, are supported by false prophecies—and the term 'intolerable' might well have been taken by Greene's readers as a plea for the censorship of Marlowe's 'impious' verse. After this Greene took to needling Marlowe whenever he had the chance, referring to him as 'the cobbler' who teaches actors to spout speeches like Julius Caesar, asserting that the 'unsavorie papers' of the first edition of *Tamburlaine* were used by pedlars to wrap their powders in, and most notoriously upbraiding him along with Shakespeare in his posthumously-published pamphlet *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit Bought With a Million of Repentance* (1592):¹¹

Wonder not [...] thou famous gracer of Tragedians, that *Greene*, who hath said with thee like the foole in his heart, There is no God, should now give glorie unto his greatness: for [...] his hand lies heavie upon me [...] and I have felt he is a God that can punish enimies. Why should thy excellent

⁸ Greene explains his reference to Diogenes more fully in his *Farewell to Folly* (1591): '*Diogenes* hath taught me, that to kicke an asse when he strikes, were to smell of the asse for meddling with the asse'; *Life and Works of Robert Greene*, ed. A. B. Grosart, 15 vols. (London and Aylesbury, 1881–86), 9:230.

⁹ *Life and Works of Robert Greene*, ed. Grosart, 7:7–8.

¹⁰ Honan, *Christopher Marlowe* (see above, n. 1), p. 184.

¹¹ For these attacks, see Honan, *Christopher Marlowe* (see above, n. 1), pp. 184–85.

wit, his gift, be so blinded, that thou shouldst give no glory to the giver? [...] Defer not (with me) till this last point of extremitie; for little knowest thou how in the end thou shalt be visited.¹²

Printed so shortly after Greene's death, and followed so soon by the death of Marlowe, these words would no doubt have had a major impact on any reader who recalled them in the aftermath of Marlowe's assassination. Scholars now largely agree that they were not written by Greene but by Henry Chettle, who had a habit of ascribing his work to other people.¹³ More interestingly, though, they tie Greene to Marlowe as an atheist, while separating him from his fellow playwright by stressing his repentance. In the process Marlowe becomes a second Faustus, just as Greene had identified him with his earlier protagonist Tamburlaine in the 1580s. Marlowe's gift of 'excellent wit' is dangerously allied with the folly of religious blindness, and his fate is prophetically hinted at by the reference to an unexpected, and possibly 'extreme' end: 'Defer not (with me) till this last point of extremitie; little knowest thou how in the end thou shalt be visited'. The process of fusing Marlowe with his characters was well advanced by the time this passage was composed, and anticipates the inventive fusion of allusions to his plays with some seeds of truth and much malicious gossip that constitutes the infamous Baines Note.

If Chettle did write *Greene's Groatsworth*, he had a firm grasp of one of Greene's most disarming characteristics: his tendency to put things off, which is referred to in the title of one of his 'autobiographies', *Greene's Never Too Late* (1590).¹⁴ One of the texts whose publication Greene deferred till after his death was an entertaining pamphlet called *Greene's Vision*, written in 1590 but not published till 1592. In it, the spirit of the biblical King Solomon finally persuades the prolific author to give up his practice of penning romances—though not before Geoffrey Chaucer has warmly congratulated him on their literary quality—and take up theology instead. Greene's motive for putting off the publication of this Chaucerian retraction seems clear enough: he was not yet ready to take up religious studies full time. But when it did appear, the pamphlet included a won-

¹² *Life and Works of Robert Greene*, ed. Grosart (see above, n. 8), 12:141–43.

¹³ See John Jowett, 'Notes on Henry Chettle [pt 1]', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 45 (1994), 384–88.

¹⁴ On Greene's habit of deferral, see R. W. Maslen, 'Robert Greene and the Uses of Time', in *Writing Robert Greene*, ed. Kirk Melnikoff and Edward Gieskes (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2008), pp. 157–88.

derfully desperate piece of prose that brings Greene as close to Faustus as Marlowe seemed in the *Groatsworth*:

When with a strict insight, I [...] take a straight accompt what the deedes of my youth have beene [...] oh then what a fearefull terror dooth torture my minde, what a dungeon of dollours lyes open to swallow me? As the Scorpion stings deadly, and the Vipers bites [*sic*] mortally, so dooth the worme of my conscience grype without ceasing. And yet O Lord, a deeper miserie, for when with a foreseeing consideration I looke into the time to come, wherein the secret conjecture of my faults and offences, shall be manifested and laid to my charge, and that I know *Stipendium peccati mors*, Oh then whether shall I flie from thy presence? shall I take the wings of the morning and absent my selfe? can the hideous mountaines hide me, can wealth redeeme sinne, can beautie countervale my faults, or the whole world counterpoise the ballance of mine offences? oh no, and therefore am I at my wits end, wishing for death, and the end of my miserable dayes, and yet then the remembrance of hell, and the torments thereof drive me to wish the contrarie.¹⁵

Here the first and last speeches of Marlowe's protagonist—whose adventures may well have been staged a year or so before this passage was written, in 1589¹⁶—run together, as the curtailed reference to St Paul's letter to the Romans from *Doctor Faustus* I.i.39 ('*Stipendium*, etc. / The reward of sin is death') collides with the wild desire for escape, metamorphosis or oblivion from V.ii.104–23. Greene does not identify himself here with Faustus/Marlowe's supposed atheism—he is guilty only of 'vanitie, and fond conceited fancies'—and once again his repentance is implied at the end of the pamphlet. But his willingness to mimic Faustus indicates Greene's keen perception that the drama of his own life might profitably (and indeed daringly) be made the subject of his fiction, just as Marlowe's life had got mixed up with his dramatic fabrications. Greene worked out this perception in his cony-catching pamphlets as well as his autobiographies. In these pamphlets his bad behaviour in London—the reason for his need for repentance—supplies him with the raw material for an exposition of the seamier side of London life; while the very act of exposition puts him in danger of retaliation from the men and women whose crimes he exposes, so that each new cony-catching pamphlet becomes an instalment in an ongoing game of cat-and-mouse, played out (Greene would have us believe) between the London mafia and the intrepid pamphleteer.

¹⁵ *Life and Works of Robert Greene*, ed. Grosart (see above, n. 8), 12:207.

¹⁶ See 'Faust in England: Dating the *English Faust Book* and *Doctor Faustus*', in *The English Faust Book*, ed. John Henry Jones (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 52–72.

Paper becomes a kind of theatre, implicitly stirring up frantic action in the underworld each time it leaves the press, and whipping its audience into frenzied anticipation of the next instalment as each pamphlet ends. One wonders how far Greene's brilliant staging of this drama in his final publications was inspired by his inclination to link Marlowe with his own quasi-historical overreachers, Tamburlaine and Faustus?

Characteristically, Greene deferred the last instalment of his cony-catching pamphlets—the *Black Book*, which he announced in two pamphlets published in 1592—until it was too late, advertising it as forthcoming when he was already in the grip of his final illness. *The Black Book* was to have been the climax of his one-man war on the London underworld, naming and shaming all the principal criminals operating in the capital. Greene's death cut short this climax; and when at last a *Black Book* came out in 1604, it was written by Thomas Middleton, and took the form of a sequel to Tom Nashe's celebrated satire *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Devil* (1592) rather than to anything written by Greene—though the title clearly links it with Greene's promised pamphlet. The book was printed in a black letter font that associated it with the early 1590s, when Nashe and Greene were active, and is full of references to the stage, including two to Marlowe.¹⁷ When the devil visits Pierce Penniless in the pamphlet he finds him in a bed surrounded by cobwebs, spun by 'spindle-shank spiders' which 'went stalking over his head as if they had been conning of *Tamburlaine*' (p. 213). And a pimp is described as having a head of hair 'like one of my devils in *Doctor Faustus* when the old Theatre cracked and frighted the audience' (p. 209). The Oxford Middleton glosses this line as an allusion to the supernatural events that were rumoured to attend productions of Marlowe's tragedy, as performed, perhaps, in the old Theatre playhouse in Shoreditch before its demolition in 1597. But Eric Rasmussen sees it instead as a reference to an incident in the *Second Report of Doctor Faustus*, when Faustus's tragedy is re-enacted by his ghost and a cast of devils in an 'excellent faire Theator' (sig. E2v) in the sky above Wittenberg.¹⁸ This supernatural spectacle ends when the stage collapses into the river 'with a most monstrous thundering crack' (sig. Fir), to the horror of the watching citizens. Rasmussen strengthens his case by pointing out that the chief

¹⁷ See *The Black Book*, ed. G. B. Shand, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, 2007), pp. 204–06. All references are to this edition.

¹⁸ Eric Rasmussen, 'The *Black Book* and the Date of *Doctor Faustus*', *Notes and Queries* 235, n.s., 37 (1990), 168–70.

actor-devil in the *Second Report* is remarkable for his haircut: he makes his subordinate devils tremble by stamping his foot and 'shaking his great bushe of hair' (sig. C3r), which helps explain the reference to the pimp's 'head of hair' in Middleton's *Black Book*. The difficulty with Rasmussen's argument is the reference to the 'old Theatre', since 'old' seems an inappropriate epithet for a temporary aerial playhouse. Could it be, then, that the incident in the *Second Report* has been elided in Middleton's mind with an actual incident that took place in the Shoreditch Theatre? As Rasmussen points out, the London stages were always creaking, cracking, even collapsing, and Middleton need not have had in mind the collapse of a stage during a performance of *Doctor Faustus* in particular; after all, for the theatre-haters *all* dramatic performances were devilish. In the *Black Book*, fact and fiction merge—rather as the appearance of the book itself, with its old-fashioned typeface, links it both physically and fictitiously, as it were, with the satiric fictions of the early 1590s.

Middleton's *Black Book* poses as a kind of literary ghost, recalling its readers to a decade when the supernatural stalked the streets of London, both in the shape of pamphlets about Purgatory, dead writers and the devil, such as *Pierce Penniless*, and in the form of necromantic plays such as *Doctor Faustus* (performed in September 1594) and Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (performed in February 1592 and April 1594). The two plays were also linked to successful works of prose fiction: *The History of the Damned Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*, translated from the German *Faustbuch* in about 1588, and *The Famous History of Friar Bacon*, an English imitation of the former.¹⁹ The cross-fertilization of fact and fiction, prose and drama at this time coincided with a special interest among writers and their audiences or readers in the interaction between spirits and ordinary mortals; an interest testified to by the revival of the ghosts of Robert Greene and the clown Dick Tarleton in prose narratives written after their deaths (the latter featured in *Tarleton's News Out of Purgatory*, 1590, and the popular jestbook *Tarleton's Jestes*).²⁰ *The Second Report of Doctor John Faustus* shares many features with the other supernatural narratives of the early 1590s; but the games it plays with the relationship between fact and fiction, page and stage, and the living and

¹⁹ For the dates of both texts, see *The English Faust Book*, ed. Jones (see above, n. 16), pp. 52–72.

²⁰ See R. W. Maslen, 'Dreams, Freedom of Speech, and the Demonic Affiliations of Robin Goodfellow', *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* 1.1 (2009), 129–44. (<http://northernrenaissance.org/articles/Robin-Goodfellowbr-Robert-Maslen/13>, accessed 2.8.2011).

the dead are very much more sophisticated than those of its rivals—a fact which, together with its anonymity, may have contributed to its relative obscurity in the annals of English fiction. The book may simply have been too clever to be readily assimilated into any of the categories by which scholars have sought to taxonomize Tudor prose fiction. The games begin in the preface or prologue of the first edition, and a close analysis of this prologue will give a good indication of the pamphlet's unique relationship to the interwoven legends of Dr Faustus and Christopher Marlowe.

2. *Authenticity and Charlatanism in the Prologue to the Second Report*

The first game with 'fact' played in the prologue is the notion that the *Second Report* is a translation from the German. Although a German sequel to the original *Faustbuch* was in print by 1594—the so-called Wagner Book—the *Second Report* has nothing to do with it, as Harold Jantz pointed out in the 1950s.²¹ Instead, it purports to be based on information translated from second-hand testimony by an English gentleman student in Faustus's hometown of Wittenberg; and it boosts its claims to authenticity by questioning the accuracy of the English translation of the original *Faustbuch*. 'I have talked with the man that first wrote [it]', claims the student, 'wherein he saith manie thinges are corrupted [in the translation], some added *de novo*, some canceld and taken awaie, and many were augmented' (sig. A4r). In recent years John Henry Jones has demonstrated the extent to which these accusations would hold true of P. F., the *Faustbuch*'s translator, who inserted passages freely, enlarged the sections that interested him and omitted offensive material; and anyone who knew this would have been impressed by the *Second Report*'s apparent concern for textual accuracy.²² This pose of scholarly scrupulousness is reinforced by a meticulous description of three tourist sites in Wittenberg offering physical evidence that Faustus existed, 'which is generally a thing not beleaved' (sig. A4r). The ruins of Faustus's house, says the student, can still be seen, as can the tree where he 'used to reade *Nigromancy* to his Scholers', and

²¹ Harold Jantz, 'An Elizabethan Statement on the Origin of the German Faust Book', *Journal of English and German Philology* 15.2 (1952), 137–53.

²² See *The English Faust Book*, ed. Jones (see above, n. 16), p. 10 ff. Interestingly, Jantz proposes that the translation referred to in the passage is the German translation (the *Faustbuch*) from a lost Latin original, whose existence was surmised by Robert Petsch in his edition of the *Faustbuch*, *Das Volksbuch vom Doktor Faust* (Halle, 1911). See Jantz, 'An Elizabethan Statement' (see above, n. 21).

his tomb, marked by a stone on which his epitaph is roughly carved 'by his owne hand' (sig. A4v). The first two sites were seen by the traveller Fynes Morison in 1591, which lends force to the student's statement that '*Germany* [is not] so unknown but that the trueth of these thinges . . . may be founde if any suspect' (sig. A4r).²³ Later, when the gentleman student reveals his view of the Germans as a nation of fantasizing drunkards, the ambiguity of this last sentence becomes apparent; but on first reading one could take it as a firm assurance that the remains give material proof of Faustus's existence.

Having erected his imaginative stage, as it were, and implied the identity of one of his sources—a man who got his facts 'from *Wagner's* very friend' (sig. A4r)—the student ends his prologue with some tantalizing snippets on Faustus from a well-known work of scholarship. Dr Johann Weyer, he tells us, gives an account of one of Faustus's 'knaveries' in his book on witchcraft, *De praestigiis daemonum* (1563), whereby the magician promised to depilate a grown man permanently, but succeeded only in scorching off his victim's skin 'causing such inflammations in his face that it burned all over cruelly' (sig. B1r). Dr Weyer gives a gruesome account, too, of Faustus's end, in which he is found 'by his bed side starke dead, and his face turnde backwards' (sig. B1r). But if the painfully physical nature of both accounts seems to drive home their authenticity—who, after all, would invent such lurid details if they were not true?—they cast serious doubt on the credibility of the *Faustbuch*. Dr Weyer may support the notion that Faustus existed, but he also insists that he was a charlatan 'who could doe nothing' (sig. B1r). Indeed, Weyer's chief fame rests on his scepticism concerning magic and witchcraft, which made him an invaluable source for the English sceptic Reginald Scot, whose refutation of the myths concerning witches, *The Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584), cites Weyer frequently, as the student points out (sig. B1v). Every detail Weyer gives of Faustus's life, in fact, from the place of his birth to the manner of his death, contradicts a detail in the *Faustbuch*. Not only was the translation 'meere lies' (sig. A4r), then, but so was the original. The legend of Doctor Faustus is an artificial fog of rumour, gossip and brazen fabrication, and the book that follows proceeds to document the means by which that fog was generated.

²³ See Fynes Morison, *An Itinerary Containing His Ten Years' Travel*, 4 vols. (1617; Glasgow, 1907–08), 4:16.

If the prologue of the first edition of the *Second Report* presents the book as a kind of litmus test of its readers' intelligence, the second (published in the same year) presents it as a playful intellectual exchange between young scholars in England and Germany. Two prefatory letters were added to this second edition: 'To the Reader' and 'Unto the Christian Reader'. Both imply that the first edition had disturbed the 'bitter natures' of some of its less intelligent readers (sig. A3r)—in part because of its stylistic plainness ('Here is wanting the great *Chaos* of *Similes*, which build themselves over a Booke like *Colosses*', sig. A3r); and in part because it had been taken literally. 'This is a Booke', the writer insists, 'and so take it, and if you take it otherwise you are to blame, and if you trie your worst, you can term it but wast paper' (sig. A3r). It would seem, then, that some readers had taken it as *more* than a book—that is, as a report of actual devilish goings-on in early modern Germany, and as capable perhaps of stimulating similar incidents in its adoptive country. And when the writer goes on to state that 'I have delivered it to you from them of whome I took it for truth', and that 'if you could be as credulous as some are new-fangled, I know this might serve to be the recorded [recorde?] of Faustus' (sig. A3r–A3v), the impression that some credulous readers have been taken in by the seeming 'realism' of the first edition is confirmed. The writer goes on to imply that the text was delivered to the press against his will by the Oxford friends to whom he sent it; that he penned the two new epistles to explain this; and that 'my vaine in this booke, is nothing', since it is 'but a bare translation of as bare mater of the gestes and actes of one *Faustus* a great Magitian', a subject of such 'unworthynes' that no-one should read it (sig. A3v). The first of the new epistles, then, presents the *Second Report* as a double prank played by two sets of scholars: the gentleman student, who sent the manuscript to his Oxford friends as a humanist *jeu d'esprit*; and the 'injurious' Oxford friends themselves, who gave it uncorrected to the printer, so that other men might 'laugh at the rude phrase'—that is, mock its crude style—and thus embarrass their Wittenberg correspondent (sig. A3v). Those who detract from the book for something *more* than its stylistic defects expose themselves as 'fools' like the common players, since they make themselves what they wish to make others: the butt of laughter.

This account of the book's genesis is supported by the second epistle, 'Unto the Christian Reader'. The letter purports to have been written by the friends of the gentleman student, and confirms the origins of this 'novel' or 'news' (think of the news Tarlton brought from Purgatory, which were 'novels'—literally 'new things'—or short stories) in a private game

among the educated gentry. 'These newes here raised out of auncient copies', it declares, 'a Gentleman friend of ours translated for our private intelligence amongst our selves, and sent them from Wittenberge to Oxenford' (sig. A4r). The playfulness of the supposed translation is evident in the notion of something *new* being generated from *ancient* copies—a seemingly absurd proposition which is in any case undermined by the gentleman student's statement that he 'acquired these pages piecemeal from students at Wittenberg' (*Accepi ego has chartulas sparsim a studiosis Wittenbergensibus*), a source that scarcely guarantees their antiquity.²⁴ And the playfulness continues in the penultimate sentence of the second epistle. 'The truth is', it concludes, 'that these [new stories or ancient copies] are commonly carried about for very certainty, yea and some are secretly laide up in grave men's studyes for great reliques' (sig. A4r). The balance here implied between 'very certainty'—incontrovertible truths—and 'great reliques', the hallmark of papist superstition, tells us exactly what we should think about the grave men who take such nonsense literally. The narrative to follow is no 'truthe' but a fiction, and should be read as nothing more. Those who accept it as fact and denounce it as dangerous are merely adding to its entertainment value by making a spectacle, for cleverer readers, of their own gullibility.

An intriguing aspect of the two new epistles is the dates appended to them. The first, from the gentleman student, is dated May 1590. The second incorporates a Latin letter from the same student, dated July 1589, in which he commends his 'trivial' translation of Wagner's adventures to the attention of his Oxford colleagues. The implication is that the *Second Report* was first printed between these dates. There is no evidence of a first edition of the *Second Report* before 1594, though of course it could well have been lost, like the first edition of the *Damnable History*. But it is equally possible that the dates in the epistles were fabricated, for some special purpose of the writer or printer. The *Second Report* was entered in the Stationers' Register for November 16, 1593; and the fact that the first known edition of 1594 does *not* contain the two epistles, while the second contains them, suggests that they were composed between the two editions as a means of defusing the controversy to which the first gave rise. In support of this hypothesis is the fact that the printer of both editions, Abel Jeffes, had been in trouble with the authorities in 1592 for printing books

²⁴ My thanks to Robert Cummings for furnishing me with a translation of the Latin in the second epistle.

whose copyright belonged to another printer; and that he continued to court controversy till it ended his career (in 1595 he published Giovanni Cipriano's 'lewd' book *A Wonderful Prophecy upon this Troublesome World*, which led to the destruction of his press and letters by the Stationers' Company).²⁵ He therefore had a motive both for reassuring the authorities that the *Second Report* was not another blot on his publishing record—that is, for adding the explanatory letters to the second edition when the first proved scandalous—and for continuing to excite the *frisson* in his readers that the *Wonderful Prophecy* later provided, in such unfortunate measure that it ruined him.

Further indications that the dates were fabricated might be cited. The German sequel to the *Faustbuch*, the *Wagnerbuch*—which may well have inspired the *Second Report*, despite the fact that the book is no translation—was not published until 1593. And Chapter Nine of the *Second Report* contains a few verses in 'Ari[o]stos vein' (sig. F2r) that form a prologue to the Ariosto-esque second half, a link with *Orlando Furioso* which could have been suggested by the success of Sir John Harington's translation, first published in 1591. Neither piece of evidence is conclusive, of course, but they lend additional weight to my conjecture. Why, then, would the claim that the *Second Report* had been first published in 1589–90 make things easier for its printer and author than the admission that it was new in 1594? The answer may lie in the perceived connection between the text and that playful scholar Christopher Marlowe, whose death in 1593 may have prompted Jeffes to register the *Second Report* a few months later. The *Second Report* is a ghost story, like the posthumous adventures of Greene and Tarleton. In it, the most famous creation of the notorious 'atheist' Marlowe (as Greene called him) returns from the dead to lend his services to the Doctor's former houseboy, Wagner; and we have already seen how Faustus had been linked with his creator by Greene. In this book, too, the houseboy Wagner (whose nickname here is the same as Marlowe's, Kit—in the *Famous History* he is always Christopher), takes on his master's mantle not just as conjurer but playwright: it is he who stages the production of Faustus's trial in the sky above Wittenberg. And in it—unlike the *Faustbuch*—neither Faustus nor Wagner gets punished for meddling with magic. If this narrative had been taken on its first appearance as a half-blasphemous vindication of the notorious atheist playwright, and

²⁵ For a summary of Jeffes's career, see *The English Faust Book*, ed. Jones (see above, n. 16), pp. 45–50.

if this is what made it controversial, then both writer and printer may have deemed it prudent to claim that it originated several years before the playwright's murder. It remains to be seen, then, how far the text can be read as I've suggested; how far, in fact, the *Second Report of Doctor John Faustus* might have given its early readers a second report on Marlowe, to set alongside the infamous calumnies of the Baines Note.

3. *Fictions of Fiction in the Second Report*

The narrative of the *Second Report* is divided into two neat halves, each of which derives its tone and content from one of Marlowe's plays. The first half takes place in Wittenberg, and tells the story of Faustus's former houseboy Wagner as he takes on his master's mantle as a great magician. This part culminates in the supernatural performance of the Tragedy of Doctor Faustus in the air above the town, which ends with the thunderous collapse of the stage into the river Elbe. The second half takes place at a fictionalized Siege of Vienna (1529), and derives its delight in spectacular conflict both from the *Orlando Furioso* and from Marlowe's first stage triumph, *Tamburlaine the Great*. In this section Wagner uses magic to assist the Duke of Austria in his wars against the Turks, executing a series of practical jokes on the Great Turk himself designed to humiliate and baffle the unfortunate sultan. The jokes resemble the tricks Faustus plays both in the *Faustbuch* and in Marlowe's play, but being directed against a monarch they also recall the humiliating practices of Tamburlaine, who liked to cage his royal captives and use them as entertainment at mealtimes, as well as forcing a team of kings to draw his chariot like 'pampered jades'.

The amoral tone of the narrative, too, may owe something to Marlowe. P. F., the translator of the *Faustbuch*, toned down the moral comments of the German original, but retained enough didactic touches to soothe the consciences of his Christian readers. The conclusion, for example, exhorts them to 'fear God and to be careful of their vocation and to be at defiance with all devilish works, as God hath most precisely forbidden'.²⁶ The *Second Report* follows a quite different moral trajectory. The first half pays careful lip service to the qualms about pacts with the devil—even imagined ones—which get articulated both in the *Damnable History* and

²⁶ *The English Faust Book*, ed. Jones (see above, n. 16), p. 181.

in *Doctor Faustus*. But the second half abandons these qualms altogether, and permits Wagner to enlist the help of the devil in the ongoing Christian struggle against the heathen. The first half takes care to establish the historical and geographical context of Wagner's adventures in his hometown of Wittenberg. The second throws historical accuracy to the winds and represents the Siege of Vienna as an orientalist extravaganza, with giant horses and elephants. The narrative, then, journeys from a state of profound uncertainty regarding the relationship between the imagination and real life—implying the very real dangers of succumbing to the allure of imagined power—to an unabashed celebration of fiction, unalloyed by any fear about confusing the factual and the fantastic. The book looks like a conscious effort to move prose fiction forward from the old-fashioned view of it as a form of pedagogy, in tune with the agendas of religious reformers, to a proto-modern celebration of imaginative writing for its own sake. In this it shares its attitude with the books that narrate the afterlives of Greene and Tarleton, tracing the paths of the two celebrities through such controversial posthumous environments as Purgatory and the Shades of classical myth, and transforming these spaces in the process from sites of religious controversy into treasuries of narrative: inexhaustible repositories of gossip, tale, secret history and anecdote. Like Marlowe's drama, these ghostly texts (*Tarleton's News out of Purgatory*, *Greene's News Both from Heaven and Hell*, *Greene in Conceit*) mark a major step on the road from post-medieval didactic literature to 'pure' literature as it is understood today; and the *Second Report* seems to be particularly frank about its ambition to take part in the contemporary reinvention of theatrical and literary fiction.²⁷

Within the two-part structure sketched out above, the *Second Report* is organized into a varied sequence of chapters, each of which constitutes a rhetorical *tour de force*, an exuberant experiment in some new style or generic convention. These include a philosophical-theological disquisition by Mephistopheles; the theatrical performance by devils in the sky; a disastrous incident involving some Wittenberg students, Faustus's stolen books of magic, and a bunch of sadistic devils; and a spectacular single combat between the Duke of Austria, mounted on a giant horse, and the Great Turk, mounted on an elephant. Each set piece is treated in a

²⁷ This passage builds on arguments I developed (in relation to other texts) in *Elizabethan Fictions* (Oxford, 1997), and 'Dreams, Freedom of Speech, and the Demonic Affiliations of Robin Goodfellow' (see above, n. 20).

quasi-theatrical manner, and repeatedly has recourse to the language of the theatre—a tendency that distinguishes the *Second Report* from the *Damnable Life*. Even the epistle 'To the Reader' in the second edition adopts this language, describing the gentleman student as going 'personate' (i.e. masked, anonymous) like a Roman actor and as fearful for his reputation 'if my maske shall fall'—that is, if his identity should be unveiled (sig. A3v). In response to these theatrical touches, one nineteenth-century critic went so far as to conjecture that the *Second Report* might be based on a German play about the life of Wagner.²⁸ The book is a kind of comedy on paper, pervaded by the spirit of the experimental mid-Elizabethan drama of which Marlowe was the leading exponent.

The link with the theatre is established in the opening chapter. Wagner strays into the hall where 'his Maisters latest Tragedy was perfourmed' (sig. B2v)—that is, where he died—while thinking about the great magician's 'former meriments, sports and delights' (all terms connected with plays in early modern England) and the various 'comicall journeis' he accomplished with the devil's assistance (sig. B2r). This inspires the young man to think about calling up Faustus's ghost to act as his familiar. At this point the doors fly open and a pageant enters, like a version of the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins in Marlowe's *Faustus*. First 'entred as it were the prologue of a Comedy, a fellow so short and litle as if hee should be of one year, and yet not so briefe as ill favored' (sig. B2v). He is followed by a boy with rusty metal wings 'like an Angell of Hell'; a king dressed in rags; Lucifer 'king of the *Orient*'; and Faustus himself, drawn in a cart by a pair of giant spaniels. The doctor is crowned by the spirits, accompanied by a 'huge tumult and ecchoing of trumpets' (sig. B3r). Then the performers vanish. Impressed by this 'merry Enterlude' (sig. B3r), Wagner decides that he merits crowning even more than Faustus; a reaction that would have confirmed the fears of any devout reader concerning the pernicious effects of Marlovian drama on the minds of its spectators. But such fears are undermined by the style of the narrative, which makes use of a quasi-Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* to emphasize the fictional status of the reported performance, and the correspondingly fictional status of Wagner's reaction to it. The doors of the hall fly open 'Sodainly', we are told, because 'alwaies such haps are sodain'—a phrase that reduces the

²⁸ Richard Stralik, 'Doktor Faust und die erste Türkenbelagerung Wiens', *Zeitschrift für Allgemeine Geschichte*, ed. Hans von Zwiédineck-Südenhorst, 4 vols. (Stuttgart, 1884–87), 1:401–06.

dramatic entrance to a well-worn cliché (sig. B2v). The winged boy holds in his hands a flaming torch like an extra in a play ‘to give light to the after-commers and beholders’; and one beholder, Wagner, is intensely conscious that the person he takes for Faustus is not the man himself, despite the impulse he has to greet him as his former master (‘so naturall was his semblaunce, so lively his countenaunce, as if it had eyther beene a new *Faustus*, or not the olde murdered *Faustus*’). Finally, after the pageant is over Wagner is quick to dismiss it as a baseless mirage: ‘an illusion[,] dream, or a temptation, or else some conceite proceeding from his moiste and melancholicke fantasie, overprest with too many vapors, raised up by continuall thought into his Pores’ (sig. B3r). He looks back on the ‘comicall jest’ as ‘meere fansie’ (sig. B3r), and tells it to his companions as ‘a matter of great truth and litle moment’ (i.e. small importance) (sig. B3v). In doing so he implicitly dismisses the fears of the student’s own readers as to the damaging effect on their minds of the devilish book they are perusing.

This section of the narrative, then, partakes of the playful interweaving of mimetic realism and reflexive fictionality that characterizes the prologue of the first edition and the two epistles of the second. And the rest of the narrative is filled with a similar blend of realism and self-conscious fictionality. The next chapter, for instance, tells of a similar ‘illusion’ involving a group of travelling merchants who come across a dance of ‘countrey maids servants, and other of the female sexe’, known as ‘*Phogels*’, in a place called the ‘*Phogelwald*’ not far from Wittenberg (sig. B3v–B4r). The dance assumes a supernatural dimension when they see Faustus’s ghost dancing cheerfully among the women. He greets them and leads them away to a Land of Cockaigne full of beer-mugs that grow like flowers, ‘wherin as they seemed they dwelt many daies with great mirth and pleasure’ (sig. B4r–B4v), till devils shatter their idyll and they wake to find themselves half-buried in mud by the river. Once again, however, the veracity of the story is undermined—not this time by the possible ‘melancholy’ of the witnesses, but by their habitual drunkenness, a condition that afflicts all Germans, the student tells us. The beer of Germany is so thick, he claims, that the vapour rising from it ‘clambering up and spreading it selfe so universally in the fantasie, maketh it to conceive no other impression, but that which the minde afore it came to be overpressed was conversant about’ (sig. B4v). The subject of the merchants’ conversation when they met the *Phogels* was ‘*Faustus* merriments’; so it is scarcely surprising when they started to drink that a brand new ‘merriment’ should have been the result. In this way the student suggests that every appearance of Faustus’s ghost

since his tragic demise was engendered by the addled imaginations of a beer-swilling nation—though the inclusion of two English merchants in the Phogelwald episode suggests that the English, too, are quite capable of having lascivious visions of their own through excessive drinking.

The third chapter describes an encounter between Wagner and Faustus, which takes up the theme of Faustus's posthumous existence from the pageant episode in Chapter One. Faustus appears to Wagner ('sodainely like as all such chaunces happe') in a secluded grove, suspended (as the ensuing conversation reveals) in mid-air, yet seemingly flesh and blood like Wagner himself (sig. C1r). There ensues a lengthy dispute between master and student concerning the possibility or otherwise of a material body hovering above the earth without succumbing to the force of gravity. The dispute culminates in Faustus filling a cup with his own hot blood to prove his body substantial. He invites Wagner to inspect the cup, then grabs the youth by the hand and beats him 'miserably' to clinch his point, leaving him 'halfe dead' on the ground, with the final injunction 'hereafter . . . either to be more wary or lesse mistrustfull' (sig. C3r). Once again the episode is intensely self-reflexive. In addition to the comment on the cliché of Faustus's 'sodaine' appearance, the translator notes the long-windedness of Wagner's part in the disputation ('I wondred when I read this discourse, with what patience the Doctor could endure so long an argument', sig. C2r), and concludes with a brusque dismissal of the chapter's quality as fiction. It is typical, he observes, of the gross 'lies' that the Germans like to 'father' on Faustus, 'new children' (in the form of stories) who 'cost very litle nursing and bringing uppe' (sig. C3r). In this chapter, then, a discussion between Wagner and Faustus concerning substance and insubstantiality is identified as a thing of no substance—which is no surprise, the narrator adds, when you 'consider from whose braines [it] proceede[s]', since 'witte for the most part [the Germans] have very little' (sig. C3v). By this stage in the narrative, the relationship between substance and the insubstantial, nature and the supernatural, has been identified as a matter of psychology. The brain conceives as real what it *wishes* to conceive as real, and lends it substance through the force of its own credulity. Magic is a product of the imagination, and can do no harm to those who recognize its fanciful nature. And the point is underlined by the role played in the disputation by a cup full of blood.

Presented to Wagner by Faustus as proof of his corporeality, the blood in the cup undergoes a perverse transubstantiation after the doctor's disappearance: it changes into a 'Cap full of pisse', a filthy item from his own wardrobe. This is only the first of a series of gibes linking magic to

papist superstition throughout the text. In Chapter Ten, for instance, 'A lamentable history of the death of sundry students of Wittenberg', the students' doom is sealed when they seek to protect themselves while working magic with the useless clutter of Catholicism: 'the surplusses, the stoles, pall, miters, holy water pots broken, their periapts, seats, signes of the Angels of the seaven daies, with infinite like trash and damnable rogg[u]ery, the frutes of the Divels rancke fansie' (sig. F4v). The inefficacy of these Catholic symbols, like the revolting transformation of a cup to a piss-filled cap, reminds the readers of the *Second Report* that they inhabit a world where 'fansie' has long run rampant in the form of mistaken or perverse religions. But it also affirms the readers' capacity, as responsible and intelligent adults, to appreciate the obvious differences between reality and illusion, substance and shadow, true faith and false; a skill that permits them to see fictions like the *Second Report* for what they are, harmless 'merriments' of the sort that made Marlowe famous.

The third episode that concerns itself with illusory posthumous presences occurs in Chapter Six, which contains 'A long discourse betwixt the Divell and Wagner' on the question of whether the spirits of the damned may return to life in corporeal form. Resurrection of this kind is regularly practised by writers and actors, of course, so that mimetically speaking, at least, it is perfectly possible; and although the discussion that follows engages with the *theology* of resurrection—in particular, the controversy over Purgatory which had been humorously taken up in the 'post-humous' prose fiction of the early 1590s (think of *Tarleton's News Out of Purgatory*)—it is equally preoccupied with the question of *fictional* representations both of resurrection and of theology. The discussion begins uneasily, with Wagner drawing attention to a problematic aspect of the *Faustbuch* and Marlowe's *Faustus*. Both these narratives affirm that the devils became enraged when the doctor tried to ask them questions about theology; and Wagner begs Mephistopheles to have patience if he does the same, 'for what hurt can redound to you', he asks reasonably, 'by answering of a question?' The point could also apply, of course, to those severe Elizabethans who objected to the presence of theological questions in light fiction; and the reasonable response to Wagner's inquiry—that engaging with such questions, in itself, can do no harm—is pointed up by the self-evidently fantastic context of the disputation that follows.

Mephistopheles reacts to Wagner's cautious inquiry by flying into a rage, rushing in and out of the room and striking the table (in another anti-Catholic touch, the mark he leaves in the wood is later made into a relic). After that 'he takes me one booke and hurls it against a Cupboorde,

and then he takes the Cupboord and hurls it against the wall, and then he takes the wall and throwes it against the house, and the house out at the Window' (sig. D1r). Only then does he calm down, at which point he 'sate down further off, and thus quietly spake with a lowde voice' (sig. D1r). This sequence of impossible reactions, culminating in a house being flung out of its own window and a loud voice speaking quietly, confirms the ironic spirit in which the ensuing disputation should be received. Mephistopheles lends his support to orthodox Calvinist doctrine, insisting that there are only two states following death, salvation and damnation, with 'no place left for a third'—that is, for Purgatory (sig. D2v); but the gentleman student clearly anticipates Protestant as well as Catholic objections to this section of the narrative. He observes that Puritans or 'precisians'—'they that have their consciences of the more precise cut'—will be horrified by Mephistopheles's intervention in a matter of divinity, but that 'they which have right mindes' will remain immune to the devil's influence, or, by extension, to anything written about him (sig. D3r). On the contrary, he insists, it is the 'precise' Puritans who lead the more feeble-minded Christian astray with 'vayn reasonings and questions' (sig. D3r). Like Milton in *Areopagitica*, the student assumes that his readers are grown-up enough to distinguish between sense and nonsense, good and bad arguments—that is, until some Puritan succeeds in confusing them. The problem lies not in fiction but its recipients; it is a position thoroughly familiar from defences of poetry. Once again, stories and plays come across as a kind of intelligence test, and also as a measure of orthodoxy, distinguishing Catholic and Protestant extremists from the more moderate adherents of the Elizabethan religious settlement.

Mephistopheles reinforces this implicit defence of fiction by acknowledging the ultimate uselessness of his own rhetoric. 'I can', he admits, 'largely discourse of al divine and humaine propositions, but as the unlearned Parrat who speaketh oft and much, and understandeth never any thing to profite himselfe' (sig. D3v). In other words, his ability to talk theology has no effect on his own damned condition; and by extension, it should have no effect on those who hear it. Mephistopheles urges Wagner, too, to dismiss the devil's discourse as empty noise: 'Knowest thou not (quoth he) that all the Rhetorickes are the servaunts of my tongue, or that we can move pittie or hatred when we please[?] Foole as thou art forget these vaine conferences, perswade thy selfe that they are but the effect of speach' (sig. D4r). Instead he encourages the boy to immerse himself in pleasures of the flesh; and the chapter closes with a passage of sheer self-indulgence. Mephistopheles summons an Italian lady into Wagner's

chamber; she is described in lascivious detail (though the description is 'farre more copious in the Dutch Coppy', the student informs us), and Wagner himself is given the appearance of 'Armisverio the Ladies Lorde' so that he can have his way with her (sig. D4v). The rest of the night, we are told, passed for Wagner 'in such pleasure as I could find in my heart to enjoy or any man (unless an Euenuch) beside' (sig. E1r). And this sentence marks the beginning of the end of moralising in this cheeky narrative. By encouraging the male reader to join him in imaginative complicity with his youthful protagonist, the student adds the final touch to his case for the relative harmlessness of taking pleasure in fiction. This is a book for men who acknowledge that they are no eunuchs, who can see no sin in indulging in imaginative pleasures, who know they have both souls *and* bodies, both hearts *and* minds ('I could find it *in my heart*', the student admits, to share Wagner's enjoyment). The discussion of Faustus's corporeality in Chapter Three takes on a new significance: precisians ask more of the flesh than it can very well deliver. Human bodies contain blood, and blood demands the satisfaction of its sexual as well as its nutritional requirements. The position seems far more compatible with Marlowe's sympathetic treatment of Faustus than with the moralistic stance of the *Faustbuch*, or even the *Damnable History*.

Conventional morality continues to assert itself from time to time in the chapters that follow—without it, after all, where would be the *frisson* in composing a satanic narrative?—but it gets increasingly overshadowed by the delights experienced by Wagner, and vicariously by narrator and reader, as he plunges ever more exuberantly into the practice of necromancy. In Chapter Seven, for instance, the narrator praises Wagner's good looks, and the moral note is sounded with seeming reluctance at the end of the eulogy: 'ther was nothing wanting in the man but a godly minde' (sig. E1v). In Chapter Eight, the 'Tragedy of Doctor Faustus seene in the Ayre' shows how the doctor's overthrow is accomplished after he has rejected the assistance of a 'Legion of bright Angels ridinge uppon milke white Chariots' in his final fight against the forces of darkness—a clear statement of Faustus's guilt in rejecting God's aid (E3r). But the fictiveness of the narrative is again stressed when the student refuses to describe the devilish theatre in detail, since this would run contrary 'to the nature of the whole History', with its fast pace and impish tone (sig. E2v); and he goes on to quote from the ultimate Renaissance text on writing fiction, the first seven lines of the *Art of Poetry* by Horace (sig. E2r), in support of his decision to use a plain rhetorical style for a modest subject. The stress in this chapter, then, is on artistry, both in the devils' production of

'The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus' and in the narrator's skilful description of it. The moral lesson is decidedly secondary. And in case we haven't got the point, the chapter soon veers away from the performance altogether, to describe a physician's fantastic voyage to Arabia Felix on a winged horse in search of a cure for one of the performance's traumatized spectators, a young girl. The digression has a similar tone to the satirical digression concerning Mercury and the maid in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*; and like that digression it serves to underline the philosophy that informs the work as a whole. The physician's journey represents a wholly *benign* use of magic—deployed for the purpose of curing an innocent patient; and it ends by demonstrating the fictional nature of the performance in the air, and its consequent harmlessness. The parents of the traumatized girl healed by the physician decide to erase all traces of the satanic performance that induced her trauma. They 'for ever after caused the place wherein their daughter was thus scared' (that is, the meadow above which the tragedy of Faustus was performed) 'to bee unaccessable for man or beast, compassing it in with a high wall, and overthrowing the banckes, so that now there is no mention of the medow nor of the wall' (sig. E4v). In other words, not only has the location of the aerial tragedy been removed from public sight, but so has the *means* of its removal—the high wall that blocked it from view. It would be as easy to overlook this piece of chomology (how could a wall be the cause of its own disappearance from the historical record?) as to miss the illogicality of the earlier statement that Mephistopheles 'quietly spake with a lowde voice'. But to do so would be to confirm that one is not sophisticated enough to read comic prose in the proper spirit; that one is, in fact, an incompetent reader, incapable of appreciating the ironic, slippery tone of contemporary fiction.

The mockery of didacticism, and of Elizabethan paranoia concerning the ill effects of fiction on its readers, reaches its climax in the story's second half. Here Wagner is assisted by damned spirits, including the ghost of his former master, in the laudable business of playing a string of cruel tricks on the Sultan of Turkey, thus helping to foil his plot to overthrow Christendom. The notion of devils defending Christendom may be unexpected, but it builds on Mephistopheles's staunch defence of Protestant orthodoxy in Chapter Six. And it could also be taken as a robust defence of the most celebrated English chronicler of Faustus's adventures, the late Kit Marlowe, against charges of atheism based on his work. If Marlowe could conjure up devils this did not make him a devil; if he could imagine Tamburlaine this did not make him a heathen. As many have pointed out, nothing happens to Faustus—or Tamburlaine,

Barabas, Edward II or the Guise—that contravenes Calvinist doctrine; all come to a sticky end (with the notable exception of Tamburlaine in Part One) which ought to satisfy the fiercest of moralists. And the point is driven home in the *Report* by Mephistopheles's orthodoxy. His behaviour is in many ways impeccable, his theology sound, his defence of Christendom resolute; and the student author could have pointed this out to any would-be detractors. At the same time, his Mephistopheles, like Marlowe's, is immensely sympathetic—in fact the *Second Report* elicits more sympathy for its damned characters, and grants them a happier ending, than any play by Marlowe. It is composed of the same explosive mixture of conformity and controversy, humour and horror, that made the dead man's work so attractive.

Throughout the second half, for instance, the tone of the narrative continues to veer from solemnity to silliness, from the didactic to the daft, until it becomes effectively impossible to paint a coherent picture of the writer's moral outlook. A portrayal of the Christian leader, Duke Alphonsus of Vienna, as the ideal prince and defender of the faith, is followed by the lurid account of an orgy thrown by Wagner before he sets off to fight on the Duke's behalf. The tricks Wagner plays on the Great Turk end with the poor man's death—swiftly followed by a magical resurrection, as if to underline the peculiar fusion of the comic and the serious that make this narrative so hard to pin down—after which he is soundly buffeted and plastered with mud, a treatment that might well have delighted the book's more aggressive Christian readers. But the chivalrous Duke expresses his horror that so great a monarch should be treated so shamefully, thus rebuking any reader who took pleasure in the man's humiliation. And Wagner's response is to restore the Great Turk to his former condition, and to wipe from his mind all remembrance of his ordeal. Resurrection, restoration, the eradication of unhappy memories—all these imply that there is nothing to be feared from playing the devil in fiction. The temptation to see this as a justification of Marlowe's treatment of the Turkish Emperor Bajazeth in *Tamburlaine the Great* is irresistible; Tamburlaine's cruelty on stage, it implies, has no more serious consequences than Wagner's cruelty to the Great Turk, and takes no more permanent purchase on the viewer's brain. And Wagner's obedience to the Christian Duke recalls Faustus's service to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, in *Doctor Faustus*. Tamburlaine, Faustus, the Duke, Wagner, even Mephistopheles, are all made champions of the new mimesis in this narrative, which represents the strangeness of the human mind in all its complexity, liberated from the need to conform

to the simplistic patterns of cause and effect laid down by the moralists. And the point would seem to be clinched in the final section, when Wagner and Faustus are made honorary Englishmen.

The last battle against the Great Turk sees the German magicians and their team of familiars take their places among the 'English archers' in the Christian army (sig. K1r). Here they show an expertise in the tactical uses of the 'eughen bow' (sig. K1v)—instrumental in the English victories at Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt—to match their skills in necromancy. And in return for their patriotism, their inevitable fate as damned spirits is replaced by celebration, a triumphal party that embraces the whole of continental Europe. The concluding sentence of the book tells how the Duke and his fellow Christian princes 'with great joy caused generall feasts and triumphs to be performed in all theyr kingdomes, provinces, and territories whatsoever' (sig. K2r). And this lapse into the language of official proclamations seems to cast a retrospective benison on the man who brought Faustus to the English stage. If Faustus could be reinvented as an English hero, then Marlowe could be a hero too, and his ghost reimagined as a vigorous participant in the retrospective celebration of his achievements that took place, on stage and in print, in the wake of his murder. Clearly *The Second Report* must be seen as among the wittiest and most inventive contributions to this celebration.

RHETORICAL PLAY IN CORNELIUS AGRIPPA:
THE *DECLAMATION ON THE NOBILITY AND PREMINENCE*
OF THE FEMALE SEX

John Flood

In the first scene of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, the protagonist sums up his aspirations with the announcement that he 'Will be as cunning as Agrippa was, Whose shadows made all Europe honor him'.¹ Although this is the best-known English literary reference to Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486–1535), his reputation as an occultist was such that it is likely that he contributed to the imaginative construction of other fictional masters of shadows including Archimago, who in *The Faerie Queene* commanded 'Legions of Sprites', or Prospero who exercises much of his power through Ariel.² Knowledge of Agrippa's work and reputation (the latter often biased towards notoriety) was widespread in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England and he was known by John Dee, Philip Sidney, Gabriel Harvey, Thomas Nashe and Fulke Greville, amongst others. On the Continent, his influence was to be found in the works of Giordano Bruno, Dürer, Rabelais, Montaigne and Juan Luis Vives.³ Despite relative obscurity in subsequent centuries, Agrippa's presence is to be found in authors as various as Goethe, Guillaume Apollinaire

¹ Act 1, scene 1, lines 117–18 (A-Text) and 110–11 (B-Text) in Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. David Scott Kastan, Norton Critical Editions (New York, 2005). For Marlowe and Agrippa, see Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, Routledge Classics (London, 1979; repr. London, 2001), pp. 135–47. Marlowe may have named his protagonist after Faustus of Milevis, whom Augustine described as having been deceived by the Manichees and who was condemned as a heretic in Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *Henric Cornelius Agrippa, of the Vanitie and Vncertaintie of Artes and Sciences*, trans. James Sandford (London, 1569), p. 168r. (Despite its age, this is the best English translation of the work and it is accessible through EEBO, *Early English Books Online*. Translations have been checked against the Latin original.) See Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford 1991; repr. 1998), 5.13.

² For both English and Continental writers, see Michael H. Keefer, 'Agrippa', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Toronto, 1997); Yates, *Occult Philosophy*, p. 187.

³ Charles G. Nauert, *Agrippa and the Crisis of Renaissance Thought*, Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences 55 (Urbana, 1965), pp. 323–28; Yates, *Occult Philosophy* (see above, n. 1), pp. 57–70, 74–75, 137–471, 211–12; Keefer, 'Agrippa' (see above, n. 2), p. 43.

and Marguerite Yourcenar.⁴ This celebrity was due in large part to his *De occulta philosophia libri tres* (*Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, 1533). Given this book's endorsement of ceremonial magic and account of the summoning of demonic aid, it is unsurprising that Agrippa's life became entangled with legend, equipping him with a black dog as a demonic familiar.⁵ However, Agrippa was also renowned (and just as frequently damned) for his treatise *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium, atque excellentia verbi Dei, declamatio invectiva* (*On the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Sciences and Arts, or the Excellence of the Word of God, an Invective Declamation*, 1526), in which he condemns occult practices alongside other human learning.⁶

A shorter work of Agrippa's has also received considerable attention. His *Declamatio de nobilitate et prae excellentia foeminei sexus* (*Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex*, 1529) was originally delivered at the University of Dôle in 1509.⁷ Although less famous than Agrippa's works on magic and epistemology, the *Declamatio* was an influential text in its time. In addition to being reprinted in the Latin editions of Agrippa's works, in the sixteenth century it appeared in one Polish, two German, two Italian and five French versions.⁸ In the early seventeenth century, the latter, combined with the work of Christine de Pizan, provided the models for profeminist writing (sometimes to the extent that they were restrictively dominant).⁹ Agrippa's was also one of the most celebrated profeminist texts of early modern England, a fact attested by several translations (in 1542, when it was reprinted in the same and in the

⁴ Nauert, *Agrippa*, pp. 330–31; Paola Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic in the European Renaissance*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 125 (Leiden, 2007), pp. 115–17.

⁵ Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic*, p. 139.

⁶ 'Invectives' and 'declamations' were terms from Classical rhetoric referring to types of writing that were essentially suasive. More will be said about declamations below. For invective, see Lindsay Cameron Watson, 'invective', in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (Oxford, 2003).

⁷ The Latin title is taken from the opening of the text of the declamation in Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *De nobilitate & prae excellentia foeminei sexus... De sacramento matrimonii... De originali peccato...* (Antwerp, 1529), A4r. The title page of this collection omits *declamatio*.

⁸ The translations of the work and their influences are summarised in Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex*, ed. Albert Rabil Jr., *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago, 1996), pp. 27–29.

⁹ Linda Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture (1598–1715)*, Bibliothèque Littéraire de la Renaissance 3.36 (Geneva, 1993), pp. 246–47.

following year, in 1559, twice in 1652 and in 1670).¹⁰ The dissemination of this work has assured it a secure place in European intellectual history as well as in studies of gender in Renaissance English literature.

The *Declamatio* originated in friendly suggestions from Simon Vernier, the vice-chancellor of the university, and Archbishop Antoine de Vergy, both of whom regarded it as a means of attracting the patronage of Princess Margaret of Austria for a deserving scholar.¹¹ As it happened, at about this time Agrippa was also lecturing on Johannes Reuchlin's *De verbo mirifico* (1494), the cabbalism of which brought Agrippa under attack from the Franciscan provincial of Burgundy (who considered Reuchlin's work to be Judaizing), with the consequence that he had to quit Dôle and the *Declamatio* was left unprinted for twenty years.¹² Since a text of the 1509 original has not survived, it cannot be known to what extent the printed version may have differed from it. Between the delivery of the lecture and its eventual publication, its author travelled in Germany, England, Switzerland and Italy before returning to France. He was never a wealthy man, and there was no retinue to carry around his belongings, so it is even possible that the original text of the lecture was lost, lent or damaged by the time Agrippa came to prepare it for the press. Even if this was not the case, it is hard to imagine that the work was unrevised. Certainly, the *De occulta philosophia* of 1510 was transformed for its publication in 1531.¹³ The likelihood of alteration is important since it licenses the treatment of the *Declamatio* in the light of Agrippa's post-1509 work.

The declamation's thesis is the superiority of women over men. As a result, Agrippa has been described as a 'thoroughgoing defender of women' and the *Declamatio* identified as 'the most explicitly feminist text to be published in England in the first half of the [sixteenth] century'.¹⁴ Advocating female preeminence rather than gender equality or

¹⁰ 'English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC)', accessed 13/8/10; available from <http://estc.bl.uk>.

¹¹ See Agrippa's letter to Maximilian Transilvanus in Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence* (see above, n. 8), pp. 39–40.

¹² Nauert, *Agrippa* (see above, n. 3), p. 28.

¹³ The revised first book was printed in 1531 and the complete, three-book work in 1533. A summary of this process is found in Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia libri tres*, ed. Vittoria Perrone Compagni, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought* 48 (Leiden, 1992), pp. 15–50. The textual apparatus of this edition makes the revision of the work clear.

¹⁴ Diane Kelsey McColley, *Milton's Eve* (Urbana, 1983), p. 42; Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca, 1992), p. 122. Other exponents of Agrippa's basic profeminism include Albert Rabil Jr. in Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence*

the rejection of standard antifeminist claims was an unusual, but not an unprecedented approach. Despite his protestations of originality, many of Agrippa's ideas had venerable pedigrees. Most immediately, it seems likely that he knew Juan Rodríguez del Padrón's *Triunfo de las donas* (*Triumph of the Women*, c. 1440), a work that contains many of what came to be regarded as Agrippan arguments, and which he could have encountered in Spain where he had travelled in 1508, the year before he delivered the *Declamatio*.¹⁵

Some extra-textual information lends support to the claim that Agrippa is pro- or proto-feminist (the precise terminology is not important to this argument). The work's dedicatee, Margaret of Austria, was not one to leave the books of a protégé unexamined (she later sent *De incertitudine* to Louvain for scrutiny). In 1508 Margaret had actively represented her father, Maximilian I, at Cambrai and the political astuteness testified by her later appointment as regent of the Netherlands¹⁶ was matched by her humanist interests. It is unlikely that someone looking for royal preferment would have risked provoking one of Europe's best-connected patrons of the arts with an obviously antifeminist satire. In addition, there are hints that Agrippa may have evinced independent profeminist attitudes: he took the part of Catherine of Aragon against Henry VIII in the 'King's great matter'; unlike the king, he was happily married on two occasions (he could not decide whether his first or his second wife was more loving) and, although he may have divorced a third wife, he wrote positively about marriage, an attitude that often accompanied an appreciation of women's dignity when misogamy and misogyny seemed interchangeable.¹⁷ More ambiguously, and connected with his interest in magic, he successfully

(see above, n. 8), p. 32; Marc van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa: The Humanist Theologian and his Declamations*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 77 (Leiden, 1997), p. 196; Diane S. Wood, 'In Praise of Woman's Superiority: Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *De nobilitate* (1529)', in *Sex and Gender in Medieval and Renaissance Texts: The Latin Tradition*, ed. Barbara K. Gold, Paul Allen Miller, and Charles Platter (Albany, NY, 1997), p. 190.

¹⁵ For Agrippa in Spain, see Nauert, *Agrippa* (see above, n. 3), pp. 15–16. For Rodríguez, see John Flood, '“Dentro del paraíso, en compañía de los ángeles formada”: Eve and the Dignity of Women in Juan Rodríguez del Padrón's *Triunfo de las donas*', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 79. 1 (2002), 33–43; *idem*, *Representations of Eve in Antiquity and the English Middle Ages*, Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture 9 (New York, 2011), pp. 82–88.

¹⁶ Alice Tobriner and Ilse Guenther, 'Margaret of Austria (1480–1530)', in *Contemporaries of Erasmus: A Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. Peter G. Bietenholz, vol. 2 (Toronto, 1986), pp. 388–89.

¹⁷ For Catherine of Aragon see Van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa* (see above, n. 14), p. 121 n. Agrippa's relationships with his first two wives are discussed in Nauert, *Agrippa* (see above, n. 3), pp. 40, 71; Van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa* (see above, n. 14), pp. 38, 42.

defended a woman accused of witchcraft, a crime that was frequently premised on the inherent gullibility or perversity of the weaker sex. However, his defence was procedural and did not deny the reality of witchcraft.¹⁸ He was also credited with a treatise (now lost if it ever existed) against inquisitors' persecution of witches (*Adversus Lamiarum inquisitores*), and in *De incertitudine* he abhors the fact that 'poore women of the cuntrie, which being accused or appeached of witchecraft, or sorcerie... are by them [inquisitors] put to cruel and terrible tormentes'.¹⁹ His pupil Johann Weyer went on to be a celebrated opponent of witch-hunts as well as a defender of his master's posthumous reputation.²⁰

On the other hand, there are modern readers who judge some of the arguments in the *Declamatio* to be 'deliberately frivolous', 'jocular' and marked by 'ludicrous twists of logic'.²¹ It has been suggested that the work is 'a conscious exercise in paradox' that 'confirms rather than undermines the assumption that male supremacy is normal and natural'.²² Doubts about Agrippa's sincerity are by no means new: Henry Care, one of the declamation's seventeenth-century English translators, wrote of 'generous' Agrippa and his defence of the 'weaker party'.²³ For Care, in a 'giddy Age wherein each extravagant opinion finds a welcome... an innocent *Paradox* may fairly hope for *Pardon* at least'. Since tyranny, injustice and ugliness have had advocates amongst the learned, he can 'see small reason why Asserting the *Pre-eminence* of the *Female Sex*, should too severely

One source records a third wife from whom Agrippa separated in 1535. *Ibid.*, p. 48. For Agrippa's attitude to marriage, see his *De sacramento matrimonii declamatio* (1526).

¹⁸ Nauert, *Agrippa*, pp. 59–61. It should be noted that for Agrippa witchcraft and the 'natural magic' of *De occulta philosophia* are two separate spheres.

¹⁹ For *Adversus Lamiarum inquisitores*, see Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic* (see above, n. 4), p. 70. Agrippa, *Vanitie and Vncertaintie* (see above, n. 1), p. 167r.

²⁰ Weyer, however, did not have pro-feminist views as he wrote that the Devil 'especially seduces stupid, worn out, unstable old women'. See *De praestigiis daemonum* (1563), ch. 6 in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, ed. Brian P. Levak (London, 2003), p. 282.

²¹ Michael H. Keefer, 'Agrippa von Nettesheim, Henricus Cornelius' in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed 1/2/2009; available from www.rep.routledge.com; Eugene Korkowski, 'Agrippa as Ironist', *Neophilologus* 60. 4 (1976), 594–607, at 595. Korkowski regards the *Declamatio* as a satire.

²² James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1993), p. 110. See also Anthony Levi, *Guide to French Literature: Beginnings to 1789* (Detroit, 1994), p. 351. Agrippa's 'brazen' inversion of exempla and his use of 'open parody' are remarked by Barbara Newman, 'Renaissance Feminism and Esoteric Theology: The Case of Cornelius Agrippa', *Viator* 24 (1993), 337–56, at 349.

²³ Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *Female Pre-eminence: or the Dignity and Excellency of that Sex, above the Male*, trans. H[enry] Care (London, 1670), A2r–v.

be censured'.²⁴ This diversity of opinion is unsurprising when determining the stance of a writer who was both the author of a book on magic and a book endorsing scepticism (he defended both *De occulta philosophia* and *De incertitudine* until the end of his life). One possible response is to characterise his overall output as incoherent.²⁵ Read with more attention, *De incertitudine*'s pervasive doubt (which precedes the revival of Pyrrhonic scepticism) can be seen as an endorsement of a fideism in which the key to knowledge is the Bible,²⁶ a position that can be reconciled with that of a Christian cabbalist.²⁷ An understanding of the unity of its author's *oeuvre* sheds light on the *Declamatio* and its view of gender. This chapter argues that an awareness of Agrippa's use of rhetoric, occult knowledge and the Bible explains what he was doing without thereby resolving any of the enigma of a figure who divided his attention between conjuration and Christian piety.

De incertitudine's targets were so numerous (including a rhetorical attack on rhetoric and a hermeticist's assault on magic) that early modern audiences frequently took it to be aimed at 'those who frequent the courts of great lords and want to learn how to speak about an infinity of matters in a way contrary to common opinion'.²⁸ An English translation noted that Agrippa was parading 'the excellencie of his wit... for a shewe of Learning' while in *The Defence of Poesy*, Sir Philip Sidney made a literary connection: 'Agrippa will be as merry in showing the vanity of science as Erasmus was in the commending of folly', describing both authors

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Air.

²⁵ Keefer, 'Agrippa von Nettesheim'.

²⁶ Yates, *Occult Philosophy* (see above, n. 1), p. 50; Erica Rummel, *The Confessionalization of Humanism in Reformation Germany* (New York, 2000), p. 63; Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*, revised ed. (Oxford, 2003), pp. 28–29.

²⁷ For other explanations of the apparent contradictions in Agrippa's writings, see Nauert, *Agrippa* (see above, n. 3), pp. 215–16; Christopher I. Leirich, *The Language of Demons and Angels: Cornelius Agrippa's Occult Philosophy*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 119 (Leiden, 2003), pp. 88–93. For Christian cabbala in general, see Yates, *Occult Philosophy* (see above, n. 1).

²⁸ Translated from the French edition of 1582 in Charles G. Nauert, 'Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed 2/2/2009; available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/agrippa-nettesheim/>. When Agrippa was taken seriously, he attracted criticism for blasphemous scepticism. He was attacked by Calvin in *On Scandal* (1550) and in 1584 André Thevet complained that there remained 'no corner or secret of any discipline where he had not nosed about and there vomited some overflow of his mortal poison' (cited in Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus: A 1604-Version Edition*, ed. Michael Keefer, 2nd ed., Broadview Editions [Peterborough, ON, 2007], p. 265.) The work was condemned by Louvain and the Sorbonne. Van der Poel, *Cornelius Agrippa* (see above, n. 14), pp. 119–20.

as 'smiling railers'.²⁹ The latter observation was particularly perceptive since Agrippa had corresponded with Erasmus (whom he admired), and *Encomium moriae declamatio* (*A Declamation of the Praise of Folly*, 1511) may have influenced Agrippa's description of *De incertitudine* and the *Declamatio* as declamations.

Classical declamations were rhetorical exercises produced as if by a participant in a fictional law case or as if designed as advice to someone in a historical or mythological situation. An important element of the procedure was the invention of arguments.³⁰ Agrippa departed from this precedent somewhat, abandoning the forensic or pseudo-historical setting but retaining the fictive construction of a speaker. In the *Apologia* (1533) he directed against critics of *De incertitudine* from the theology faculty at Louvain, Agrippa explained that the text 'does not render judgment, does not establish doctrine, but speaks according to the rules of a declamation'. Some things it says 'in jest, others in earnest, some wittily, others in a severe tone'. A declamation's author is 'sometimes uttering his own opinion, at other times that of others. Sometimes he says things that are true, at other times things that are false or dubious. In some places he disputes, elsewhere he admonishes. He does not everywhere criticize or teach or make assertions; nor does he necessarily give his own opinion. He adduces much that is not valid in order to invite rebuttal and resolution and sometimes argues on opposite sides of a question'.³¹ A declamation is not, therefore, intended as the final word on a topic. It allows the writer to step outside himself and experiment with ideas without committing to them. It advances proposals for discussion rather than providing the endpoint of debate. As such, like *Encomium moriae* it is essentially serious in intent while retaining a playfully provocative quality that does not restrict it to uniformly viable arguments. Bearing this in mind is necessary for an understanding of the *Declamatio*'s approach to gender. Although the work is relatively short, an exhaustive commentary on each of its arguments would be both lengthy and redundant. Here, the focus is on a sample of some of the most important points he raises, those connected with Genesis 1–3.

²⁹ Agrippa, *Vanitie and Vncertaintie* (see above, n. 1), p. iii; Philip Sidney, *Sir Philip Sidney: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, The Oxford Authors (Oxford, 1989), p. 233.

³⁰ Michael Winterbottom, 'declamation', in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (Oxford, 2003), p. 436.

³¹ Cited from Rummel, *Confessionalization* (see above, n. 26), p. 65.

Appropriately, Agrippa's arguments for women's superiority open with the creation of male and female in Genesis 1:26. God, the reader is told, created humanity in his own image and 'Sexual distinction consists only in the different locations of the parts of the body for which procreation required diversity'.³² Men and women have identical souls and 'Woman has been allotted the same intelligence, reason, and power of speech as man'. 'Thus', he concludes, 'there is no preeminence of nobility of one sex over the other by reason of the nature of the soul'.³³ Consequently, female preeminence is a function of superior embodiment manifested generally in feminine beauty and individually in particular virtuous heroines. Agrippa continues: 'in everything else that constitutes human being the illustrious feminine stock is almost infinitely superior to the ill-bred masculine race. This will appear indisputable when I have demonstrated it . . . not by forged or counterfeit speech or by the snares of logic in which many sophists love to entrap us, but by taking for authorities the best authors and by appealing to authentic historic accounts, clear explanations, the evidence of Holy Scripture, and prescriptions drawn from the two laws [canon and civil]'.³⁴ There are a number of problems with this. '[T]aking for authorities the best authors' can amount to little more than picking the ones that suit your argument, while in *De incertitudine* Agrippa is alive to the possibility that 'historic accounts' can teach vice as well as virtue.³⁵ Appeals to law sit uneasily in a work that recognises that laws are variable and often discriminate against women.³⁶ However, declamations were not about providing 'indisputable' conclusions that have been 'demonstrated' so Agrippa's use of these words is rhetorical (in keeping with his rejection of sophistry that could have been employed by any sophist). This univocal introduction should not blind readers to Agrippa's deployment of a range of arguments that were to be taken with differing degrees of seriousness.

Agrippa begins with a consideration of the names 'Adam' and 'Eve' (this analysis, common in defences of woman, is called the argument *e nomine* by modern authors).³⁷ He explains 'Eve' as signifying 'life', while 'Adam' is

³² Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence* (see above, n. 8), p. 43.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁵ Agrippa, *Vanitie and Vncertaintie* (see above, n. 1), p. 13v.

³⁶ Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence* (see above, n. 8), p. 95.

³⁷ Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life*, Cambridge Monographs on the History of Medicine (Cambridge 1980; repr. 1983), p. 91. Maclean also explains the arguments

translated merely as 'earth'. 'And as far as life is to be ranked above earth', he argues, 'so far is woman to be ranked above man'.³⁸ Agrippa buttresses his logic with appeals to law and the Bible. His method is in harmony with the hermeticism of *De occulta philosophia* since Adam called the woman 'Eve' (Genesis 3:20) and the first man, knowing the true properties of things, named them in accordance with their natures.³⁹ The argument is elaborated with the observation that in Hebrew 'Eve' shares two letters, its etymological root and the number of its letters with the Tetragrammaton (YHWH, the name God reveals for himself in Exodus 3:14). 'Adam', on the other hand, 'accords with the name of God neither in letters nor in form nor in number'.⁴⁰ Here again Agrippa deploys a logic based in his esoteric researches, one which is typical of cabbalism's regard for the Tetragrammaton as a name of special power.

However, even a sympathetic reader in a position to see how reasoning based on naming makes perfect sense for a cabbalist may be disquieted by some of Agrippa's throwaway observations. He claims that Cyprian interpreted 'Adam' as 'because the earth was made flesh' (so far so good) but Cyprian's grasp of the language was faulty. Agrippa is forgiving: 'let us not criticize the exposition of so holy a man, who did not understand Hebrew'.⁴¹ Because of this precedent, Agrippa hoped that he might be given 'a similar license . . . to derive the etymology of the name of Eve in honor of women according to my judgement'.⁴² This loose approach to Hebrew is obviously at odds with the close calculations usual in the cabbala. Arguments based on Hebrew names will hardly succeed if they are deficient from the start. Similarly, Agrippa's ending fails to inspire confidence: 'We shall abstain from these mysteries for now; they have been read by few, understood by even fewer, and require a much more extended discussion than it is convenient to include here'.⁴³ An argument understood by few would have been an ill-judged way in which to open a straightforward treatise. It is perfectly in keeping with the form of the declamation, however.

e loco, e materia and *ex ordine* which appear below. These are called the 'privileges of women' in Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (1997; repr. Oxford, 1998), pp. 96–125.

³⁸ Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence*, p. 44.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44 n. 17; Lehrich, *Language of Demons* (see above, n. 27), p. 132.

⁴⁰ Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence*, p. 46.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46. Agrippa's own Hebrew was rudimentary. See Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia* (see above, n. 13), p. 41.

⁴² Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence* (see above, n. 8), p. 46.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Agrippa's next manoeuvre is a version of the contention that creation proceeded from lesser to greater entities. In the beginning, minerals were followed by plants that in turn were succeeded by animals and, finally, humankind. When God created woman he 'rested himself in this creation, thinking he had nothing more honourable to create' (this has been called the argument *ex ordine*).⁴⁴ Eve was 'the most perfect accomplishment of all the works of God'. He drives the point home with a heterodox logic: 'Without her the world itself, already perfect to a fault and complete at every level, would have been imperfect'.⁴⁵ This imperfection extended to Adam: 'God blessed man because of woman, inasmuch as man had been judged unworthy to receive this blessing before the creation of woman'.⁴⁶ In addition to being the end of creation, woman was 'the completion, perfection, happiness, the blessing and glory of man'.⁴⁷ This last phrase calls to mind 1 Corinthians 11:7 (man 'is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man'), a passage from St Paul usually invoked to buttress male superiority.⁴⁸

Eve continues to dominate the *Declamatio* since Agrippa also deploys a version of the argument *e loco* (from the superiority of the place in which woman was created). Woman's origin was with the angels in Paradise, whereas man's was 'in the countryside among brute beasts' (man is transported to Paradise in Genesis 2:15).⁴⁹ Thus far, this is an unremarkable observation; however, Agrippa adds that Adam was only brought to Paradise 'for the creation of woman'.⁵⁰ Here, conventional roles are reversed, and man is manipulated for woman rather than vice-versa (the Pauline norm). This addition to the usual argument *e loco* may be logical enough, but Agrippa does not stop here. Adducing further proofs (ostensibly from

⁴⁴ The attractiveness of the argument *ex ordine* is seen in Edward Fleetwood's 1652 translation of Agrippa where it was the reason for women's superiority that was highlighted. Fleetwood's dedication was titled 'Crowne of the Creation' and its focus was on woman as God's last and 'most perfect' work. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *The Glory of Women: or, A Treatise declaring the excellency and preheminance of women above men*, trans. Edward Fleetwood (London, 1652), A3r.

⁴⁵ Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence* (see above, n. 8), p. 47. A similar use of hyperbole is to be found in *De incertitudine*. See Korkowski, 'Agrippa as Ironist' (see above, n. 21), pp. 595–96.

⁴⁶ Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence*, p. 61.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

⁴⁸ Biblical quotation is taken from Challoner's edition of the Douay-Rheims version, the closest English translation of the Vulgate. *The Holy Bible Translated from the Latin Vulgate*, ed. Richard Challoner (London, 1914).

⁴⁹ Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence*, p. 48.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

empirical observation), he points out that the literal eminence of women's place of creation has made them immune from vertigo (to which, apparently, men are prone) as well as giving them the ability to stay afloat longer than men if drowning.⁵¹ His general defence of *e loco* arguments, although based on the Bible, is similarly suspect. Isaac recommended that his son choose a wife based on her homeland and in the Gospel of John, Nathaniel enquired of Philip whether anything good ever came out of Nazareth.⁵² However, because of where Jesus comes from, Nathaniel dismisses the possibility that he was the Messiah, so this is an unfortunate example in support of the merit of judgements based on places of origin.

Agrippa completes his arguments for female preeminence based on the superiority of Eve's creation with the by then traditional profeminist argument *e materia* that proceeds from the superior substance from which woman was formed. Adam's rib was 'purified material' but he had been formed merely from 'vile clay'. Once again, Agrippa provides an elaboration: just as earth spontaneously produces animals in co-operation with 'celestial influence' Adam 'is the work of nature', while Eve, on the other hand, was 'created by God alone'.⁵³

Although woman's creation had long offered possibilities for defenders of female dignity, Eve's role in the Fall was an embarrassment. Nevertheless, Agrippa refuses to sidestep this and points out that Eve had not been created when the divine prohibition on the fruit was issued.⁵⁴ This was an orthodox observation usually followed by the supposition that Eve was informed about God's ban by her husband. In the *Declamatio*, however, Eve enjoyed a privileged liberty since God 'wished her to be free from the beginning'.⁵⁵ Furthermore, blessing is associated with Eve while law is

⁵¹ Contrast the antifeminist story: 'One can read about a certain man whose wife had drowned in a river . . . and when he was asked why he was looking for her upstream though heavy objects flow downstream and not up, he answered, "In life that woman was always contrary to my words and deeds or commands, and so I am looking for her in a contrary manner in case even in death she retains a contrary will that surpasses what is normal."' Heinrich Institoris and Jacobus Sprenger, *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum*, ed. Christopher S. Mackay (Cambridge, 2009), p. 43. There is a rejection of the *Malleus maleficarum* in Agrippa, *Vanitie and Vncertaintie* (see above, n. 1), p. 168.

⁵² Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence* (see above, n. 8), p. 49. The references are to Genesis 28:2, 6 and John 1:45–46.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵⁴ See, for example, *Paradise* 12 in Ambrose of Milan, *Saint Ambrose: Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*, trans. John J. Savage, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation 42 (Washington DC, 1961; repr. 2003).

⁵⁵ Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence*, p. 62.

associated with Adam. On this basis, 'All of us have sinned in Adam, not in Eve'.⁵⁶ Proof is provided by the necessity for males to be circumcised (interpreted here as a punishment rather than as the sign of membership of the chosen people) and by Christ's incarnation in masculine form which was an appropriate atonement for male sinfulness. Agrippa anticipates that Eve's punishments could be alleged as arguments against this and although he acknowledges that she suffered 'for having given to the man the occasion of evil', she did this in ignorance, having been deceived by the Devil.⁵⁷ By contrast, Adam sinned knowingly. This comprehensive rewriting of the usual interpretations of the Fall is finished off with a deflection of the best known rationale for Satan's decision to tempt Eve first (namely that she was 'the weaker vessel').⁵⁸ In the *Declamatio* Satan's choice is driven by his envy of woman's beauty and her reflection of the divine light.

The Fall was a topic that Agrippa engaged with elsewhere. His *De originali peccato disputabilis opinionis declamatio* (*Disputed Opinions on Original Sin, a Declamation*) was first written circa 1518, almost a decade after he delivered his oration on women. *De originali peccato* provides an allegorical interpretation of Genesis, an approach that dated back to Philo Judaeus in the first century BC and which was taken up by prominent Christian authorities such as Origen and Augustine.⁵⁹ Just as in Philo (who enjoyed considerable authority for Christians in the sixteenth century), Agrippa sees the serpent as an allegory of Pleasure; however, Eve is not allegorized à la Philo as Sense Perception, instead she represents Reason and Adam represents Faith.⁶⁰ This strikes a modern reader as a positive depiction of Eve, but in keeping with *De incertitudine*'s embrace of fideism, Agrippa held that belief was superior to rationality.⁶¹ On closer inspection, Agrippa's Reason is in fact tied to Sense Perception since Eve is tempted through 'concupiscence' and the fall of Adam/Faith is into the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁵⁸ A phrase borrowed from 1 Peter 3:4 that was frequently employed outside this context.

⁵⁹ See Flood, *Representations of Eve* (see above, n. 15), pp. 17–19.

⁶⁰ Agrippa, *De nobilitate... De sacramento matrimonii... De originali peccato*, 14v. For Pleasure and Sense Perception, see Philo Judaeus, *Philo*, vol. 1, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1929), p. 269.

⁶¹ Compare Augustine's *De Trinitate* where woman is *scientia* and man is the superior *sapientia*. See Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine's Writing on Women* (London, 1995), pp. 135–36, 140–43.

realm of the sensible.⁶² This collapse into the carnal is emphasised by Agrippa's identification of original sin with sexual intercourse.⁶³ Although Reason lead Faith astray by discursive argument, *De originali peccato* is consistent with the *Declamatio* in holding that she did not receive the prohibition on the fruit.⁶⁴ Following from this agreement is an emphasis on the sin of the man. 'All of us have sinned in Adam, not in Eve'⁶⁵ looks like a straightforward profeminist point and has been described as a 'radical reversal of conventional exegesis'.⁶⁶ Its cleverness, however, lies not in its novelty, but rather in its being traditional: it is in keeping with the idea that Eve's actions were not important enough to have transmitted death to her descendants; it is only the man who possessed that dignity.⁶⁷ The deadly moment in human history was the action of Adam: 'we are infected with original sin not from our mother, who is a woman, but from our father, a man'.⁶⁸ Eve was a sideshow. The ambiguity in Agrippa's argument is of a piece with the ambiguity of his defence of woman relying on ignorance (a standard negative female stereotype). Similar ambivalence is found in a later remark on the power she exercised over man: in spite of the fact that among men he possessed 'all the gifts of the grace of nature . . . a woman brought him down'.⁶⁹ Lest there is any doubt that something sinister was involved, the illustrations of female agency that follow include the deceptions of both Samson and Solomon (routine anti-feminist episodes).⁷⁰

Just as Eve provides the opening arguments of the *Declamatio*, she also appears at its close. What Agrippa writes is comparatively sober and accurate. The 'tyranny' of women's detractors is that 'the curse on Eve is continually in their mouth: "You will be under the power of your husband

⁶² Agrippa, *De nobilitate . . . De sacramento matrimonii . . . De originali peccato*, I4v. The knowledge humanity received from the serpent in Eden is rejected in Agrippa, *Vanitie and Vncertaintie* (see above, n. 1), p. 2.

⁶³ Agrippa, *Vanitie and Vncertaintie*, I5v. Although some patristic authorities can be read as connecting original sin with sex, this was an unorthodox position in Agrippa's time. See Flood, *Representations of Eve*, pp. 19–20.

⁶⁴ Agrippa, *De nobilitate . . . De sacramento matrimonii . . . De originali peccato*, I4v.

⁶⁵ Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence* (see above, n. 8), p. 62.

⁶⁶ Nauert, 'Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa' (see above, n. 28).

⁶⁷ See Thomas Aquinas, *The De malo of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies, trans. Richard Regan (Oxford, 2001), 4.7.

⁶⁸ Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence*, pp. 62–63.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Christine de Pizan, *Poems of Cupid, God of Love*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler (Leiden, 1990), l. 267.

and he will rule over you”'.⁷¹ Agrippa's response is that Christ put an end to this curse.⁷² He recognised, however, that the hard-hearted always find a way around every reason (the proliferation of contradictory arguments was a central thesis of *De incertitudine*) with the result that St Paul's doctrine that in Christ there is neither male nor female is put to one side in favour of biblical teaching supporting women's subjection. Knowledge of human nature introduces an element of doubt into the belief in the efficacy of his 'indisputable' theses.

The varying judgements of critics regarding Agrippa's position may well be a result of a failure to appreciate that the merit of each argument must be weighed individually (this is the heterogeneous nature of a declamation). Modern readers who focus on Agrippa's strained points tend to dismiss the *Declamatio* as an empty rhetorical exercise, in the worst sense an airy nothing. Those who concentrate on more convincing reasons find the voice of an authentic champion of women (even of a feminist) aware of the socially constructed nature of 'female'. However, separating the logic that is facetious from that that may be sound is not always easy. Thus, an argument for female superiority premised on women's hair is read as a 'manifest absurdity',⁷³ yet, judgements on women depending on hair stretch back to Samson and Saint Paul while for Aristotle, men's baldness was indicative of sexual superiority.⁷⁴ The God-given significance of hair would have appeared more important to members of Agrippa's original audience than it does in modern accounts of gender differences.

Agrippa's arguments yield no easy generalisations about their author's attitudes to gender: the *Declamatio* cannot be read simply as a profeminist or an antifeminist text. One response to this, particularly if there is an emphasis on the scepticism of *De incertitudine*, is to suggest that general epistemological issues are at the heart of the work, rather than the particular question of the nature of womankind. Since paradox can 'criticise the limitations and rigidity of argumentation... redirecting thoughtful

⁷¹ Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence*, pp. 95–96.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁷³ Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind 1540–1620* (Brighton, 1984), p. 40.

⁷⁴ See 1 Corinthians 11:14–15; Aristotle, *The Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1943), 5.3. (This is pointed out in Agrippa, *Nobility and Preeminence* [see above, n. 8], p. 55 n. 60.) Compare Erasmus's Folly: 'Besides, that unkempt look, rough skin, bushy beard and all the marks of old age in a man can only come from the corrupting influence of wisdom, seeing that a woman always has smooth cheeks'. Desiderius Erasmus, *Praise of Folly and Letter to Martin Dorp, 1515*, ed. A. H. T. Levi, trans. Betty Radice (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 89.

attention to the faulty or limited structures of thought' it represents 'an oblique criticism of absolute judgement or absolute convention'.⁷⁵ A related approach allows profeminism in through the back door: Linda Woodbridge argues that the 'rhetorical paradox is an overcorrection, pointing up the untenable nature of one extreme position by demonstrating the feasibility of arguing its opposite... Agrippa's hyperbolic praise of women is not an ironic vehicle for laying bare the sex's unworthiness but a graphic demonstration of the absurdities one must resort to if one claims superiority for either sex'.⁷⁶

Although both of these ways of reading Agrippa are appealing, they entail reducing his *Declamatio* to a single message just as much as a reading of the text as profeminist or satirical does. However, the form of the declamation is intellectually promiscuous, mixing stronger and weaker argumentation. It is experimental, launching arrows that may or may not reach their marks. A consideration of Renaissance rhetoric—for example, Erasmus's *De copia* (1518)—is more useful for reading Agrippa than focusing on Renaissance scepticism. A declamation is a rhetorical exercise. Today, when 'rhetorical' is most often equated with the 'merely rhetorical', that in itself may seem demeaning to its topic (surely the subject of his declamation on original sin could not have been considered trivial). However, a judgement like this is an anachronism that undervalues the role of rhetoric for humanist writers (and humanist readers such as Margaret of Austria). Inconvenient for categorisation in terms of a fundamental attitude to gender, Agrippa's work is an example of verbal prestidigitation and even its non-cabbalistic arguments are occult.

⁷⁵ Rosalie L. Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton, 1966), pp. 7, 10. For the *Declamatio* as paradox, see Korkowski, 'Agrippa as Ironist' (see above, n. 21), p. 595.

⁷⁶ Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance* (see above, n. 73), p. 42.

EIN SCHWERT IN FRAUENHAND: NOTIZEN ZU EINIGEN VOLKSSPRACHIGEN TEXTEN DES MITTELALTERS

Tette Hofstra

In der um 1250 entstandenen altisländischen *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, die in einer kürzeren und in einer längeren Fassung erhalten ist,¹ wird erzählt, wie der Titelheld Gisli auf Betreiben von Börk, seinem Schwager, vogelfrei erklärt wird und wie er sich jahrelang seinen Verfolgern zu entziehen weiß. Frauen sind Gisli bei den Versuchen, seinen Feinden zu entkommen, eine wichtige Hilfe. Die Frauen benutzen außer List und Betrug erfolgreich auch Gegenstände, die nicht als Kampfmaschine gelten, während umgekehrt die vereinzelte Handhabung des Schwertes nicht das beabsichtigte Resultat hat. Da fragt sich, ob vielleicht außer fehlender Waffenübung noch anderes eine Rolle spielt.

In einer Verhandlung mit Gislis Frau Aud versucht der von Börk mit Gislis Verfolgung betraute Eyjolf, mit einer Geldsumme Aud zum Verrat des Verstecks ihres Mannes zu bewegen. Nach Eyjolfs Versicherung, dass Aud mit dem Geld machen könne, was sie wolle, schlägt sie Eyjolf mit dem Geldbeutel eine Blutnase und lässt sie ihrer Tat böse Worte folgen:

And Auðr tekr nú féit ok lætr koma í einn stóran síð; stendr hon síðan upp ok rekr síðinn með silfrinu á nasir Eyiólfi, svá at þegar stökk blóð um hann allan ok mælti: „Haf nú þetta fyrir auðtryggi þína ok hvert ógagn með. Engi ván var þér þess, at ek munda selia bónda minn í hendr illmenni þínu. Haf nú þetta ok með bæði skómm ok klæki“.

Da nahm Aud das Geld und füllte es in einen großen Beutel. Dann steht sie auf und schlägt den Beutel mit dem Silber dem Eyjolf auf die Nase, so daß er sofort ganz von Blut bespritzt war, und sprach: „Hab das jetzt für deine Leichtgläubigkeit, und jedes Unheil dazu! Niemals gab es eine Aussicht für dich, daß ich meinen Mann ausliefern würde an einen solchen Schurken wie dich! Hab jetzt dies und Schimpf und Schande dazu!“²

¹ Hier wird die kürzere Fassung der Saga verwendet. Die zitierte Textausgabe ist *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, Nordisk filologi A.11, hrsg. Agnete Loth (Kopenhagen-Oslo-Stockholm, 1956). Die zitierte deutsche Übersetzung ist *Die Saga von Gisli Sursson*, Universal-Bibliothek 9836, übertr., erl. Franz B. Seewald (Stuttgart, 1976).

² *Gísla saga*, hrsg. Loth (wie Anm. 1), S. 57–58, Kap. 32; *Die Saga von Gisli*, übertr. Seewald (wie Anm. 1), S. 96.

Eyjolf verlässt Auds Haus, ohne sein Ziel erreicht zu haben. Einige Monate später wird Gislis Versteck, wo sich dann auch Aud und die Pflögetochter Gudrid befinden, von Eyjolf und vierzehn weiteren Männern ausfindig gemacht. Es kommt zu einem Kampf, an dem sich auch die beiden Frauen beteiligen:

Ok er þau verða vör við mennina, ganga þau upp á kleifarnar, þar sem vígi er bezt, ok hefir hvár þeira þusl í hendi mikla.

Und als Gisli und die Frauen die Männer erkannten, stiegen sie hinauf auf die Klippen, wo es für einen Kampf am besten war, und jede der Frauen hielt einen großen Knüppel in der Hand.³

Der Knüppel erweist sich in Frauenhand als effektive Waffe, denn Aud trifft mit einem Hieb Eyjolf so gut, dass er seine Hand nicht mehr verwenden kann:

Eyiólfr komsk upp annarsstaðar, ok kom þar Auðr í móti honum ok lýstr á hǫnd honum með lurki, svá at ór dró allt aflit ór, ok hratar hann ofan apr.

Eyjolf kam an einer anderen Stelle herauf. Da kam ihm Aud entgegen und schlägt ihm mit dem Knüppel auf die Hand, so daß alle Kraft daraus wich und er rückwärts hinabstürzte.⁴

Gisli lobt Aud wegen des Hiebes, obwohl sie Eyjolf nicht getötet hat:

Þá mælti Gisli: „Þat víska ek fyrir löngu, at ek var vel kvænt, en þó víska ek eigi, at ek væra svá vel kvænt, sem ek em . . .“

Da sprach Gisli: „Das wußte ich schon lange, daß ich gut beweibt war, aber das wußte ich doch nicht, daß ich so gut beweibt war, wie ich's bin!“⁵

Die beiden Frauen können sich gegen Gislis Feinde nicht durchsetzen und werden vorübergehend gefangen genommen. Gisli ist der Übermacht seiner Feinde nicht gewachsen; allerdings verlieren von den fünfzehn Verfolgern fünf im Kampf ihr Leben und erliegen drei weitere nach kürzerer oder längerer Zeit ihren Verletzungen.

Als Eyjolf nach Gislis Tod Börk besucht, bekommt Börks Ehefrau Thor-dis von ihrem Mann den Auftrag, seinen Gast Eyjolf anständig zu bewirten. Thordis, Gislis Schwester, ist der Meinung, dass *grautr* 'Grütze' ausreichen dürfte, und sie bereitet das Essen. Sie lässt beim Decken des Tisches den

³ *Gísla saga*, S. 63, Kap. 34; *Die Saga von Gisli*, S. 102.

⁴ *Gísla saga*, S. 64, Kap. 34; *Die Saga von Gisli*, S. 103.

⁵ *Gísla saga*, S. 64, Kap. 34; *Die Saga von Gisli*, S. 103.

Löffelkasten fallen und ergreift sofort die Gelegenheit, sich für den Tod ihres Bruders zu rächen:

Ok um kveldit, er hon bar mat fram, fellir hon niðr spónatrogit. Eyiólfr hafði lagt sverð þat í milli stokks ok fóta sér, er Gísli hafði átt. Þórdís kennir sverðit, ok er hon lýr niðr eptir spónunum, þreif hon meðalkaflann á sverðinu ok leggir til Eyiólfs ok vildi leggja á honun miðium. Gáði hon eigi, at hialtit horfði upp ok nam við borðinu; hon lagði neðar en hon hafði ætlat, ok kom í lærit ok var þat mikit sár. Bqrkr tekr Þórdísi ok snarar af henni sverðit.

Und am Abend, als sie das Essen auftrug, ließ sie den Löffelkasten fallen. Eyjolf hatte das Schwert, das Gísli gehört hatte, zwischen den unteren Längsbalken und seine Füße gelegt. Thordis erkennt das Schwert, und wie sie sich nach den Löffeln bückt, ergreift sie den Schwertgriff und stößt nach Eyjolf; sie wollte ihn mittendurch bohren. Dabei achtete sie nicht darauf, daß die Parierstange nach oben gerichtet war, und stieß gegen den Tisch – sie hatte niedriger angesetzt, als ihre Absicht war. Der Stoß traf den Schenkel, und es gab eine große Wunde. Da packt Börk Thordis und reißt ihr das Schwert weg.⁶

In Frauenhand versagt das Schwert also. Es fragt sich, ob Thordis den Löffelkasten absichtlich fallen lässt, damit sie das Schwert ergreifen kann, wie Jenny Jochens meint,⁷ oder ob sie den Löffelkasten versehentlich fallen lässt und dann die Gelegenheit, die sich unverhofft bietet, benutzt. Letzteres erscheint wahrscheinlicher, da von Eyjolfs Schwert erst die Rede ist, als der Löffelkasten bereits gefallen ist. Wie dem auch sei, man kann Jochens Recht geben, dass deutlich ist, dass Thordis Eyjolf töten will.⁸ Auch Börk ist sich darüber im Klaren, wie aus der Abfindungssumme hervorgeht: Eyjolf erhält von Börk volles Wergeld (*full manngjöld*).⁹

In der mittelalterlichen Literatur mit heroischem Stoff finden sich Anzeichen, dass Frauen besser die Finger von wirklichen Waffen lassen. Ein Beispiel bietet das mittelhochdeutsche *Nibelungenlied*.¹⁰ Die Entstehung dieser Dichtung wird allgemein um 1200 datiert; sie ist also um ein halbes Jahrhundert früher als die *Gíslasaga*. Der Stoff des *Nibelungenliedes* ist um Jahrhunderte älter, ist aber dem um 1200 herrschenden höfischen Geschmack angepasst worden. Es ist der leidgeprüften, in

⁶ *Gísla saga*, hrsg. Loth (wie Anm. 1), S. 67, Kap. 37; *Die Saga von Gísli*, übertr. Seewald (wie Anm. 1), S. 106–07.

⁷ Jenny Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women* (Philadelphia, 1996), S. 159.

⁸ Jochens, *Old Norse Images* (wie Anm. 7), S. 159.

⁹ *Gísla saga*, hrsg. Loth (wie Anm. 1), S. 67, Kap. 37.

¹⁰ Die Zitate und die Übersetzungen entstammen folgender Ausgabe: *Das Nibelungenlied: Mittelhochdeutscher Text und Übertragung*, hrsg., übers. Helmut Brackert, 2 Bände (Frankfurt am Main, 1971; 22. Aufl. 1999).

zweiter Ehe mit dem Hunnenfürsten Etzel verheirateten burgundischen Königstochter Kriemhild mit falschen Vorspiegelungen gelungen, ihren Bruder Gunther und dessen Berater Hagen an ihren und Etzels Hof zu locken. Diese beiden Männer sind verantwortlich für den Tod von Siegfried (mittelhochdeutsch: *Sîvrit*), Kriemhilds erstem Manne. Es kommt zu einem Kampf zwischen Hunnen und den burgundischen Nibelungen. Der an Etzels Hof lebende Dietrich besiegt zuerst Hagen, dann auch Gunther und übergibt die beiden Kriemhild. Kriemhilds Versuche, aus Hagens Mund zu erfahren, wo er den Nibelungenhort, Siegfrieds Schatz, versteckt hat, bleiben erfolglos. Die von Kriemhild befohlene Enthauptung ihres Bruders Gunther bringt Hagen nicht auf andere Gedanken. Dann übernimmt Kriemhild selber die Hinrichtung Hagens. Sie entnimmt dem Gefesselten das Schwert, das einmal Siegfried gehört hatte und das Hagen sich nach der Ermordung Siegfrieds angeeignet hatte und das er sich bereits einmal (Str. 1783) vor Kriemhilds Augen provozierend über die Knie gelegt hatte, als er sich nach der Ankunft an Etzels Hof im Garten ein wenig verschnaufte:

Si zôch ez von der scheiden, daz kundē er nicht erwern.
 dô dâhte sie den recken des lîbes wol behern.
 si huop ez mit ir handen, daz houpt si im ab sluoc.
 daz sach der kûnec Etzel. dô was im lédé genuoc.

Sie zog das Schwert aus der Scheide. Er konnte sich dem nicht widersetzen. Da wollte sie dem Recken das Leben nehmen. Sie hob es mir ihren Händen. Den Kopf schlug sie ihm ab. Das sah der König Etzel. Es ging ihm sehr zu Herzen.¹¹

Während im *Nibelungenlied* von einer Reaktion auf die von Kriemhild veranlasste Enthauptung ihres Bruders Gunther nicht die Rede ist, reagieren die erprobten Kämpfer Etzel und Hildebrand beide mit Entsetzen auf die Tötung Hagens. Etzel klagt nur, dass der beste Kämpfer durch Frauenhand das Leben verloren habe:

„Wâfen“, sprach der fûrste, „wie ist nu tât gelegen
 von eines wîbes handen der aller beste degen,
 der ie kom ze sturme oder ie schilt getruoc!
 swie vîent ich im wære, ez ist mir lédé genuoc“.

„Weh“, sagte der Fürst, „wie darf es sein, daß der tapferste Held, der jemals in einer Schlacht stand oder einen Schild trug, jetzt hier von der Hand einer

¹¹ *Nibelungenlied*, hrsg. Brackert (wie Anm. 10), Bd. 2, S. 262 (Str. 2373); Übersetzung *ibid.*, S. 263.

Frau erschlagen liegt. Wie sehr ich ihm auch feind war, das geht mir doch sehr zu Herzen“.¹²

Hildebrand schreitet dann zur Tat und tötet die Königin mit einem Schwert:

Hildebrant mit zorne zuo Kriemhilde spranc,
er sluoc der küneginne einen swæren swertes swanc,
...
ze stücken was gehouwen dô daz edele wîp.

In großem Zorn sprang Hildebrand zu Kriemhild. Er versetzte der Königin einen schweren Schlag mit dem Schwert... Die edle Frau war in Stücke gehauen.¹³

Die zweite Zeile von Strophe 2377 kann man als einen Hinweis darauf verstehen, dass Hildebrands Wut so groß ist, dass er es nicht bei einer effektiven Verwendung des Schwertes belässt, sondern Kriemhild zerstückelt. Nicht nur der Tod des wegen seiner kämpferischen Fähigkeiten geschätzten Feindes, der von Etzel in der oben zitierten Strophe 2374 als *der aller beste degen, der ie kom ze sturme oder ie schilt getruoc* bezeichnet wird, auch die Tatsache, dass eine Frau bewaffnet einschreitet, dürfte Hildebrands Ärger hervorgerufen haben. In einer sozialen Ordnung, in der Rache für einen Mord nicht als verwerflich gilt, dürfte die Tötung Hagens an sich nicht der einzige Grund der Entrüstung sein. Kriemhild überschreitet hier offensichtlich eine Grenze, indem sie, die Königin, als Frau selber ein Schwert handhabt. Die benutzte Waffe, Siegfrieds von Hagen missbrauchtes Schwert, ist zwar symbolträchtig, aber es ist eben eine Männerwaffe, mit der Kriemhild die für sie als Frau geltenden Grenzen verletzt.

Interessant sind die Besitzverhältnisse bezüglich der Schwerter. Thordis will Eyjolf töten mit dem Schwert, das er als seinen Besitz betrachtet und das vorher im Besitz ihres – von Eyjolf verfolgten – Bruders Gisli gewesen ist. Kriemhild hat mehr Erfolg, denn ihr gelingt es, Hagen zu töten mit dem Schwert, das einmal Siegfried gehört hat und das Hagen sich nach der Ermordung Siegfrieds angeeignet hat. In der *Gíslasaga* bleibt Thordis am Leben, wie auch ihr Opfer am Leben bleibt. Im *Nibelungenlied* wird Kriemhild getötet, nachdem sie ihr Opfer getötet hat.

¹² *Nibelungenlied*, Bd. 2, S. 262 (Str. 2374); Übersetzung, S. 263.

¹³ *Nibelungenlied*, Bd. 2, S. 262 (Str. 2376, Z. 1–2; 2377, Z. 2); Übersetzung, S. 263.

Relevant für die Verhältnisse im germanischen Mittelalter dürfte eine Szene in der um 1250 in Norwegen auf der Grundlage deutschen Erzählstoffes entstandenen *Thidrekssaga* sein. Die an Atlis Hof eingeladenen Niflungen erscheinen bewaffnet zu einem Festessen, woraufhin Atlis Gattin Grimhild sie bittet, ihr die Waffen zu übergeben. Högni lehnt ab:

Nu svarar Hogni þu ert ein drotning. huat skalltu taka vopn manna. oc þat kendi mer minn faðer þa er ek var ungr at alldri skillda ek legia min vopn a konu tru. oc meðan ek em i hunalande þa let ek alldri min vopn.

Högni antwortete: „Du bist eine Königin. Wie kannst du Männerwaffen in die Hand nehmen? Das lehrte mich mein Vater, da ich jung war, ich solle nie meine Waffen einem Weibe anvertrauen, und solange ich im Hunenland bin, laß ich niemals von meinen Waffen“.¹⁴

Högnis Reaktion ist in Inger M. Bobergs Motivverzeichnis das einzige Beispiel für ‚Tabu: women not to touch man’s weapons‘.¹⁵ Das Tabu basiert laut Alexander Haggerty Krappe auf der Angst, dass die Berührung der Waffen der Männer durch welche Frau auch immer zum Verderben der Waffen führen könne: „ce qu’il y a de certain c’est qu’on ne permit pas aux temps anciens qu’une femme touchât aux armes des hommes, de peur de les gâter“.¹⁶

In der *Thidrekssaga* ist Grimhilds letzte Tat nicht die Handhabung einer Männerwaffe, sondern ein grausamer Versuch, den Tod ihrer im Kampf verwundeten Brüder Gernoz und Giselher festzustellen. Sie vollzieht den Test, indem sie den beiden ein brennendes Holzscheit in den Mund steckt. Gernoz ist tatsächlich bereits tot, der tödlich verwundete Giselher stirbt als Folge von Grimhilds Testverfahren. Dann sind sich Thidrek und Atli einig, dass Grimhild eine Teufelin sei.¹⁷ Noch bevor der im Kampf mit Thidrek schwer verletzte Högni stirbt, wird Grimhild auf Atlis Befehl von Thidrek getötet: „Nu lœypr þiðrecr konungr ad grimhilldi

¹⁴ *Þiðriks saga af Bern*, hrsg. Henrik Bertelsen, Bd. 2 (Kopenhagen, 1908–11), S. 305; *Die Geschichte Thidreks von Bern*, übertr. Fine Erichsen, Thule. Altnordische Dichtung und Prosa 22 (Jena, 1924; Neuauflage mit Nachwort von Helmut Voigt, Düsseldorf-Köln, 1967), S. 400. Erichsens Übertragung basiert nur stellenweise auf Bertelsens Textausgabe; sie beruht vielmehr auf einer älteren Ausgabe: *Saga Þiðriks konungs af Bern: Fortælling om Kong Thidrik af Bern og hans Kæmper, i norsk Bearbejdelse fra det trettende Aarhundrede efter tydske Kilder*, hrsg. C. R. Unger (Christiania, 1853).

¹⁵ Inger M. Boberg, *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature*, Bibliotheca Arnemagnæana 27 (Kopenhagen, 1966), S. 51.

¹⁶ Alexander Haggerty Krappe, *Études de mythologie et de folklore germaniques* (Paris, 1928), S. 118.

¹⁷ *Þiðriks saga*, hrsg. Bertelsen (wie Anm. 14), Bd. 2, S. 325–26; *Die Geschichte Thidreks*, übertr. Erichsen (wie Anm. 14), S. 412–13.

och hogr hana i sundr imiðio‘ (‘Da sprang König Thidrek zu Grimhild und hieb sie mitten durch’).¹⁸

Es kann noch ein weiterer Unterschied zwischen *Thidrekssaga* und *Nibelungenlied* hinsichtlich des Umgangs mit Waffen festgestellt werden. Krappe weist darauf hin, dass auch im *Nibelungenlied* Kriemhild Hagen dazu auffordert, ihr seine Waffen zu überlassen.¹⁹ Hagen lehnt ab, aber nun mit einer Begründung, die sich nicht auf das Geschlecht von Kriemhild, sondern auf ihren Rang bezieht:

„Jane gér ich niht der êren, fürsten wine milt,
daz ir zen herbergen trüeget mînen schilt
und ander mîn gewæfen. ir sît ein kûnegîn,
daz enlêrte mîch mîn vâter niht: ich wil sêlbe kamerære sîn“.

„Daß Ihr, die großzügige Gemahlin des Königs, meinen Schild und meine anderen Waffen in mein Quartier brächtet, solch eine Ehre verlange ich nicht. Ihr seid doch eine Königin! Ein solches Verhalten hat mich mein Vater nicht gelehrt. Nein, ich will mein eigener Kämmerer sein“.²⁰

Hier liegt laut Krappe²¹ eine der Kultur des 12. Jahrhunderts und der höfischen Gesellschaft entsprechende Anpassung des alten Tabus vor. Es sei noch bemerkt, dass Roswitha Wisniewski in Hagens Antwort „den höhnisch-ironischen Ton“ hört, den Hagen auch im vorangegangenen Streit mit Kriemhild um den Nibelungenhort, Siegfrieds Schatz, gebraucht habe.²²

Dass die um ein halbes Jahrhundert jüngere *Thidrekssaga* die von Krappe für das *Nibelungenlied* festgestellte höfische Anpassung nicht aufweist, kann kaum daran liegen, dass um die Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts in Norwegen der höfische Lebensstil unbekannt oder gar unbeliebt gewesen wäre. Die von Hákon Hákonarson (1217–63 König von Norwegen) in Auftrag gegebene und 1226 von Bruder Robert fertig gestellte *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, eine norwegische Prosabearbeitung des altfranzösischen

¹⁸ *Þiðriks saga*, Bd. 2, S. 326; *Die Geschichte Thidreks*, S. 413.

¹⁹ Krappe, *Études*, S. 115–16.

²⁰ *Nibelungenlied*, hrsg. Brackert (wie Anm. 10), Bd. 2, S. 130 (Str. 1746), S. 131.

²¹ Krappe, *Études* (wie Anm. 16), S. 116.

²² Roswitha Wisniewski, *Die Darstellung des Niflungenunterganges in der Thidrekssaga: Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung*, Hermaea: Germanistische Forschungen Neue Folge 9 (Tübingen, 1961), S. 132.

Tristanromans,²³ und weitere bearbeitete Ritterromane weisen jedenfalls nicht in diese Richtung.

Der Verfasser der *Thidrekssaga* weiß zwar von relevantem einheimischem Liedgut,²⁴ aber die von ihm erzählte Geschichte hat andere Wurzeln. Der Stoff der *Thidrekssaga* mag ohne Anpassungen an den höfischen Lebensstil aus Saxland, d.h. Norddeutschland, nach Norwegen gekommen sein. Die Vermittler des Stoffes brauchen nicht den Kreisen der höfischen Gesellschaft anzugehören, denn es ist sowohl im Prolog²⁵ wie auch gegen Ende der *Thidrekssaga*²⁶ die Rede von deutschen Männern, ohne dass auf irgendeine Gesellschaftsschicht Bezug genommen wird. Möglicherweise wurde der Stoff im Kreise von Kaufleuten verbreitet. Die Suche nach einer Antwort auf die Frage, weshalb Högni in der *Thidrekssaga* bei seiner Weigerung, Königin Grimhild seine Waffen zu überlassen, sich nur auf ihr weibliches Geschlecht und nicht auch auf ihre Stellung als Königin beruft, bleibt ohne befriedigende Antwort.

Wie sehr die herangezogenen Szenen der *Gislasaga*, des *Nibelungenlieds* und der *Thidrekssaga* sich auch voneinander unterscheiden, eines ist ihnen gemeinsam: In der von Männern dominierten, vorchristlichen

²³ Siehe zur *Tristrams saga*: Rudolf Simek und Hermann Pálsson, *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur*, Kröners Taschenausgabe 490 (Stuttgart, 1984), S. 370–71 und die dort angegebene Literatur.

²⁴ *Þiðriks saga af Bern*, hrsg. Henrik Bertelsen, 2 Bände (Kopenhagen, 1905–11), Bd. 1, S. 2: 'og Daner og Svíar kunnu ath seigia hier af margar søgur enn sumt hafa þeir fært i kuæde sin er þeir skemmta ríkum monnum. morg eru þau kuæde kvedinn nu er fyrir longu voru ort epter þessare søghu. Norræner menn hafa samann fært nockurn part søghunnar, enn sumt med kvedskap'; *Die Geschichte Thidreks*, übertr. Erichsen, S. 61: 'Auch Dänen und Schweden wissen hiervon manche Geschichte zu erzählen; einiges haben ihre Lieder gebracht, mit denen sie große Herren unterhalten. Viele dieser Lieder werden noch jetzt vorgetragen, die vor langer Zeit nach dieser Geschichte gedichtet worden sind. Norröni-sche Männer haben einen Teil der Geschichte zusammengefügt, teilweise in Versen'.

²⁵ *Þiðriks saga*, hrsg. Bertelsen (wie Anm. 24), Bd. 1, S. 2: 'þesse sagha er samansett epter søgn þýdskra manna, enn sumt af þeirra kuædum er skemta skal rikunum monnum og forn ort voro þegar epter tiþindum sem seiger j þessare søghu og þo ath þu taker einn mann vr hverre borg vmm allt Saxlannd þa munu þessa søghu aller aa eine leid seigia'; *Die Geschichte Thidreks*, übertr. Erichsen (wie Anm. 14), S. 61–62: 'Unsere Geschichte ist zusammengestellt nach der Erzählung deutscher Männer, doch einiges ist aus ihren Liedern, womit man große Herren unterhalten soll, und die vorzeiten gedichtet waren unmittelbar nach den Geschehnissen, von denen in dieser Geschichte die Rede ist. Und nimmst du einen Mann aus jeder Stadt im Sachsenland, so werden alle diese Geschichten auf dieselbe Art erzählen'.

²⁶ *Þiðriks saga*, hrsg. Bertelsen (wie Anm. 14), Bd. 2, S. 393–94: 'en suo seigia þýdwesker menn ath witrast hafe i dravmum ath Þidrek kongr hafi notid af Gudi og Sancte Mariu ath hann minntist þeirra nafns wid bana sinn'; *Die Geschichte Thidreks*, S. 460: 'Deutsche Männer aber erzählen, in Träumen sei kundgetan, König Thidrek habe Gottes und Sankt Marias Beistand gehabt, weil er bei seinem Tode ihres Namens gedachte'.

heroischen Gesellschaftsordnung sollten Frauen ihre Finger von den Kampfwaffen lassen.

In den Heldenliedern der *Edda* finden sich ebenfalls einige Beispiele dafür, dass eine Frau in einer Auseinandersetzung mit einer anderen Person zum Schwert greift.²⁷ In der *Atlakviða*, die zu den ältesten Heldenliedern der *Edda* gezählt wird und für die eine Datierung um 900 oder bereits im 9. Jahrhundert erwogen wird,²⁸ rächt Gudrun sich für den von ihrem Ehemann Atli veranlassten Tod ihrer Brüder Gunnar und Högni. Zuerst bereitet sie die beiden gemeinsamen Söhne für Atli als Speise zu und dann durchbohrt sie Atli im Bett mit einem Schwert: *Hon beð broddi gaf blóð at drecca*.²⁹ Die Art und Weise, wie die beiden Söhne umgebracht werden, bleibt unerwähnt. Die letzte Strophe der *Atlaqviða* macht nur nüchterne Feststellungen, ohne Lob oder Tadel. Diese Schlusszeilen lassen die Vermutung aufkommen, dass Gudrun im von ihr entzündeten Großbrand auch selbst ums Leben kommt:

Fullrœtt er um þetta; ferr engi svá síðan
brúðr í brynio brœðra at hefna;
hon hefir þriggia þjóðkonunga
banorð borið, biort, áðr slyti.

Die Mär hat ein Ende; keine Maid tut je
in der Brünne ihr gleich, die Brüder zu rächen:
Drei Königen verkündete sie
Todesschicksal, eh die Tapfre starb.³⁰

²⁷ Folgende Ausgaben wurden benutzt: *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, 1: Text, hrsg. Gustav Neckel und Hans Kuhn, 5. verb. Aufl. (Heidelberg, 1983); *The Poetic Edda*, 1: *Heroic Poems*, hrsg., übers., eingel., komm. Ursula Dronke (Oxford, 1969). Dronkes Ausgabe hat den altisländischen Text und eine englische Übersetzung im Parallelruck. Deutsche Übertragungen stammen, wenn es sich nicht um eigene Übersetzungen handelt, aus *Edda*, übertr. Felix Genzmer, Bd. 1: *Heldendichtung*, Thule: Altnordische Dichtung und Prosa 1 (Jena, 1912; revidierte Neuausgabe mit Nachwort von Hans Kuhn, Düsseldorf-Köln, 1963).

²⁸ Siehe *The Poetic Edda*, hrsg. Dronke (wie Anm. 27), S. 42–45; Simek und Pálsson, *Lexikon* (wie Anm. 23), S. 24.

²⁹ *Edda*, hrsg. Neckel und Kuhn (wie Anm. 27), S. 247, *Atlaqviða*, Str. 41, Z. 1–2; *The Poetic Edda*, hrsg. Dronke, S. 12, Str. 42, Z. 1–2; *Edda*, übertr. Genzmer (wie Anm. 27), S. 52, Strophe 42, Z. 1–2: ‚Blut gab mit dem Schwerte / sie dem Bett zu trinken‘.

³⁰ *Edda*, hrsg. Neckel und Kuhn, S. 247, *Atlaqviða*, Str. 43; *The Poetic Edda*, hrsg. Dronke, S. 12, Str. 44; *Edda*, übertr. Genzmer, S. 52, Str. 44. Gudrun wird *biort* genannt, also eher ‚schön‘ oder ‚berühmt‘ als ‚tapfer‘, wie Genzmer wegen des Stabreims übersetzt.

In den *Atlamál*, dem längsten Heldenlied der *Edda*, das erst im zwölften oder im dreizehnten Jahrhundert entstanden sein soll,³¹ weiß Gudrun mit dem Schwert effektiv umzugehen. Sie entblößt es und tötet dann einen Bruder ihres Mannes Atli und einen weiteren Krieger.³² Wie in der *Atla-qviða* tötet sie die beiden Söhne, die sie und Atli gemeinsam haben; das Tötungsmittel bleibt ungenannt; die entsprechende Stelle kann auch so gelesen werden, dass Gudrun ein Messer verwendet: *scar hon á háls báða* ‚beiden schnitt sie den Hals ab‘.³³ Im Lichte der weiteren von Gudrun geleisteten Küchenarbeit ist ein Messer sogar naheliegend. Schließlich wird auch Atli getötet, aber auffälligerweise wird die Tötung von Gudrun und vom ungenannten Sohne Högnis gemeinsam vorgenommen. Die Waffe wird nicht genannt, aber ein Schwert ist denkbar:

veginna var þá Atli, var þess scamta bíða,
sonr vaf Högna oc síalf Guðrún.

Erschlagen war da Atli, nicht schwankten sie lange:
selbst schlug ihn Gudrun und der Sohn Högnis.³⁴

Dass Högnis Sohn mit Hand anlegt, könnte damit zusammenhängen, dass Atli Högni zu Tode hat kommen lassen; Högni wird dann auf diese Weise von seinem Sohn gerächt. Möglicherweise aber erklärt sich das gemeinsame Handeln dadurch, dass ohne männliche Hilfe Gudruns Erfolg nicht gesichert sein dürfte. Dieser Gedanke liegt vor allem dann nah, wenn davon ausgegangen wird, dass die benutzte Waffe ein Schwert, also ein richtige Waffe ist. Im Prosastück *Frá Guðrúno*, das in der *Edda*-Ausgabe von Neckel und Kuhn den *Atlamál* folgt, in der *Edda*-Edition von Dronke wie auch in anderen Ausgaben aber der *Guðrúnarhvöt* vorangeht, wird berichtet, dass Gudrun, nachdem sie Atli getötet hatte, ins Meer hinausging und sich das Leben neben wollte, aber nicht versinken konnte.³⁵ Ob Gudrun bei ihrem misslungenen Selbsttötungsversuch, von dem auch in

³¹ Siehe *The Poetic Edda*, hrsg. Dronke, S. 107–12, bes. S. 111; Simek und Pálsson, *Lexikon*, S. 24.

³² Siehe *Edda*, hrsg. Neckel und Kuhn, S. 254, *Atlamál*, Str. 49–50; *The Poetic Edda*, hrsg. Dronke, S. 86, Str. 47–48; *Edda*, übertr. Genzmer, S. 80, Str. 49–50.

³³ *Edda*, hrsg. Neckel und Kuhn (wie Anm. 27), S. 259, *Atlamál*, Str. 79, Z. 4; *The Poetic Edda*, hrsg. Dronke (wie Anm. 27), S. 92, Str. 76, Z. 4; *Edda*, übertr. Genzmer (wie Anm. 27), S. 84, Str. 77, Z. 4; ‚die Kehlen durchschneidet sie‘.

³⁴ *Edda*, hrsg. Neckel und Kuhn, S. 260, *Atlamál*, Str. 89, Z. 5–8; *The Poetic Edda*, hrsg. Dronke, S. 94, Str. 87, Z. 5–8; *Edda*, übertr. Genzmer, S. 86, Str. 87, Z. 5–8.

³⁵ Siehe *Edda*, hrsg. Neckel und Kuhn, S. 263; *The Poetic Edda*, hrsg. Dronke, S. 145. In *Edda*, übertr. Genzmer, S. 54 geht die Übersetzung des Prosatextes der Übersetzung der *Hamðismál* voran.

der vorletzten Strophe der *Atlamál* die Rede ist, eine Waffe benutzt hat, geht weder aus dem Prosatext noch aus dem Liedtext hervor. In der vorletzten Strophe der *Atlamál* wird Gudrun als *fróð*, also als ‚weise‘, bezeichnet:

fróð vildi Guðrún fara sér at spilla,
urðo dvöl ðœgra, dó hon í sinn annað.

Wandern nun wollte die weise zum Tode:
ihr Ende fand Aufschub; zu andrer Zeit starb sie.³⁶

Weshalb Gudrun *fróð* genannt wird, ist nicht klar. Da könnte vermutet werden, dass Gudrun als weise bezeichnet wird, weil sie nicht allein, sondern in Zusammenarbeit mit Högnis Sohn, also einem Mann, Atli getötet hat.

Im Kurzen Sigurdlied (*Sigurðarkviða in skamma*) prophezeit die sterbende Brünhild, dass Gudrun Atli mit dem Schwert töten wird:

Þvíat hánom Guðrún grýmir á beð,
snǫppom eggjom, af sárom hug.

Denn Gudrun besudelt ihm das Bett
mit einem scharfen Schwert, aus verletztem Gefühl.³⁷

Vor ihrer Prophezeiung hat Brünhild sich selbst mit einem Schwert (*mækis eggjom*, wörtlich ‚mit den Schneiden eines Schwertes‘)³⁸ durchstoßen, damit sie zusammen mit Sigurd, den Guttorm mit einem Schwert getötet hat, auf dem Scheiterhaufen liegen kann. Im Lied findet sich kein wertender Kommentar zu Brünhilds Umgang mit dem Schwert. Mit dem Schwert schafft Brünhild gewissermaßen Harmonie, denn sie stirbt wie der von ihr begehrte Sigurd durch das Schwert; und auf dem Scheiterhaufen soll auf ihren Wunsch zwischen ihr und Sigurd das Schwert liegen, das einst zwischen ihnen gelegen hat, als in einer vorgetäuschten Heiratsnacht ihr Mann Gunnar und Sigurd sie hinters Licht führten und Sigurd statt Gunnar mit ihr, wenn auch nur in räumlichem Sinne, das Bett teilte:

³⁶ *Edda*, hrsg. Neckel und Kuhn (wie Anm. 27), S. 263, *Atlamál*, Str. 104, Z. 5–8; *The Poetic Edda*, hrsg. Dronke (wie Anm. 27), S. 98, Str. 102, Z. 5–8; *Edda*, übertr. Genzmer (wie Anm. 27), S. 88, Str. 102, Z. 5–8.

³⁷ *Edda*, hrsg. Neckel und Kuhn, S. 216, *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, Str. 60, Z. 7–10; eigene Übersetzung. In *The Poetic Edda*, hrsg. Dronke, ist die *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* nicht enthalten.

³⁸ Siehe *Edda*, hrsg. Neckel und Kuhn, S. 215, *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, Str. 47; *Edda*, übertr. Genzmer, S. 69, Str. 47.

Liggi occar enn í milli málmr hringvariðr,
 egghvast iárn, svá endr lagið,
 þá er við bæði beð einn stigom
 oc hétom þá hióna nafni.

Zwischen uns liege wieder der ziere Stahl,
 das scharfe Eisen, wie einst es lag,
 als wir beide ein Bett bestiegen
 und man uns gab den Gattennamen.³⁹

Ein positiver Blick auf die Verwendung eines Schwertes durch eine Frau findet sich im apokryphen alttestamentlichen Stoff. Es handelt sich um die von der schönen und reichen Witwe Judith geplante und durchgeführte Tötung von Holofernes, dem Feldherrn, der im Auftrag von Nebukadnezar das Gebiet der Juden erobern soll. Judith sorgt dafür, dass der von ihrer Schönheit und Wortgewandtheit beeindruckte Holofernes sich in seinem Lager vor den Toren der Stadt Bethulia betrinkt, bevor er sich für die Nacht mit Judith zurückziehen wird. In sein Schlafzelt zurückgekehrt, fällt Holofernes sofort in einen tiefen Schlaf und wird dann mit seinem eigenen Schwert von Judith enthauptet, auffälligerweise nicht mit einem einzigen Hieb, sondern mit zweimaligem Zuschlagen.

Der alttestamentliche Stoff wurde von einem angelsächsischen Dichter in Stabreimversen bearbeitet. Die so entstandene Dichtung, die ohne ihren Anfang im Codex Cotton Vitellius A.xv der British Library überliefert ist, ist von der Forschung *Judith* benannt worden.⁴⁰ Die Frage der Datierung der 349 erhaltenen Zeilen verknüpft sich eng mit der Frage der altenglischen Mundart; spätes 9./10. Jahrhundert ist eine Möglichkeit, aber keine Gewissheit.⁴¹ Unbekannt ist, welche Vorlage (oder Vorlagen) der angelsächsische Dichter benutzt hat: *Vetus Latina* oder *Vulgata*. Sowohl im Vergleich zur *Vetus Latina* wie auch im Vergleich zur *Vulgata* gibt es Abweichungen und Weglassungen.⁴² Die altenglische Dichtung zeigt uns den Stoff in der metrischen Gewandung der germanischen Heldendichtung. Die Hauptperson ist eine Heldin, die einen für ihr Volk gefährlichen Menschen mit seinem eigenen Schwert tötet.

³⁹ *Edda*, hrsg. Neckel und Kuhn (wie Anm. 27), S. 218, *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, Str. 68; *Edda*, übertr. Genzmer (wie Anm. 27), S. 71, Str. 68.

⁴⁰ Eine Textausgabe mit Einleitung und Kommentar ist *Judith*, hrsg. Mark Griffith (Exeter, 1997).

⁴¹ Siehe die Einleitung in *Judith*, hrsg. Griffith, S. 44–47.

⁴² Siehe zur Quellenfrage Griffiths Einleitung in seiner *Judith*-Ausgabe, vor allem S. 47–61.

Rüge wird Judith nicht zuteil, im Gegenteil. Als der Sieg *purh Iudithe gleawe lare, mægð modigre* („dank dem klugen Rat der Judith, der tapferen Frau“)⁴³ errungen ist, wird ihr – wenigstens in der altenglischen Dichtung – sogar das Schwert des Holofernes als eines der vielen Zeichen der Anerkennung gebracht:

Hi to mede hyre
of ðam siðfate sylfre brohton,
eorlas æscrofe, Holofernes
sweord ond swatigne helm...

Ihr selber brachten sie, die tapfern Männer, vom Feldzug als Belohnung das Schwert und den blutigen Helm von Holofernes...⁴⁴

Mark Griffith weist in seinem Kommentar darauf hin, dass der Dichter in der Aufzählung der Beute das Vieh, weitere Tiere und Haushaltsgegenstände, die in der *Vulgata* genannt werden, weglässt und sie durch Rüstung und Waffen ersetzt; er bemerkt, dass „the giving of these to Judith both heroises and masculinises her“.⁴⁵ Aus der Dichtung geht nicht hervor, ob das Schwert in Judiths Besitz bleibt. Im Bibeltext hängt Judith alle Waffen des Holofernes, also auch das Schwert, im Tempel zu Jerusalem auf (Jud. 16, 23). Aus dem erhaltenen Bruchstück des altenglischen Textes, das allem Anscheine nach auch das ursprüngliche Ende der Dichtung enthält, geht nicht hervor, was Judith mit Holofernes' Gegenständen macht. Da könnte der Gedanke aufkommen, dass der Dichter Judith das Schwert behalten lässt.

Der Stoff des in derselben Handschrift wie *Judith*, also Cotton Vitellius A.xv, enthaltenen *Beowulf*-epos⁴⁶ ist nicht der christlich-biblichen Überlieferung entnommen, sondern steht in der germanisch-heroischen Tradition. Auch diese altenglische Dichtung, deren Entstehung von Bruce Mitchell und Fred C. Robinson mit einigem Vorbehalt zwischen 680 und 800 datiert wird,⁴⁷ kennt eine weibliche Gestalt, die in irgendeiner Weise mit einem Schwert verbunden ist. Es handelt sich um die Mutter

⁴³ *Judith*, hrsg. Griffith, S. 106, Z. 333–34a. Die deutsche Übersetzung der *Judith*-Stellen ist meine eigene.

⁴⁴ *Judith*, hrsg. Griffith (wie Anm. 40), S. 106–07, Z. 334b–36a. Die Aufzählung der Geschenke reicht bis zu Z. 340.

⁴⁵ *Judith*, hrsg. Griffith, S. 143.

⁴⁶ Die altenglischen Zitate entstammen folgender Ausgabe: *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, hrsg. Fr. Klaeber, 3. Aufl. (Boston, 1950).

⁴⁷ Siehe zur Datierungs- und Lokalisierungsfrage *Beowulf: An Edition, with Relevant Shorter Texts*, hrsg. Bruce Mitchell und Fred C. Robinson (Oxford-Malden, Mass., 1998), S. 8–13, insbesondere 11–12.

des Monsters Grendel, in deren Höhle sich ein Schwert befindet. Dieses Schwert, das u. a. als ‚altes, von Riesen gefertigtes Schwert, stark bezüglich der Schneiden‘⁴⁸ beschrieben wird und so groß ist, dass andere Menschen (als Beowulf) es nicht in den Kampf tragen können,⁴⁹ wird aber nicht von Grendels Mutter benutzt. Vielmehr versucht sie, Beowulf mit einem *seax* zu erstechen; der Versuch misslingt jedoch, weil Beowulfs Panzer dem Stich standhält:

Ofsæt þā þone selegyst, ond hyre seax getēah
brād [ond] brūnecg; wolde hire bearn wrecan,
āngan eaferan. Him on eaxle læg
brēostnet brōden; þæt gebearh fēore,
wið ord ond wið ecge ingang forstōd.

Sie warf sich auf den Gast und griff zum Messer,
breit und blinkend, an Beowulf zu rächen
ihren einzigen Abkömmling. Doch auf des Edlings Brust
lag die ringgeflochtne Rüstung. Die rettete sein Leben,
sperrte den Zugang für Spitze und Schneide.⁵⁰

Da stellt sich die Frage, was für ein Gegenstand *seax* hier bezeichnet. Im Wörterbuch des Altenglischen von Joseph Bosworth und T. Northcote Toller wird die Bedeutung von *seax* folgendermaßen angegeben: I. ‚a knife, an instrument for cutting‘; II. ‚as a weapon, a short sword, dagger‘. Die relevante *Beowulf*-Stelle (Zeile 1545) wird der zweiten Bedeutungsgruppe zugeordnet.⁵¹ Diese Auffassung ist keine Ausnahme. Man vergleiche beispielsweise das Glossar in der Ausgabe von Bruce Mitchell und Fred C. Robinson, wo *seax* mit der Bedeutungsangabe ‚short-sword‘ versehen wird, oder die Studienausgabe von George Jack, wo als Bedeutung von *seax* ‚dagger‘ angegeben wird.⁵² Fr. Klaeber und C. L. Wrenn lassen in den

⁴⁸ *Beowulf*, hrsg. Klaeber (wie Anm. 46), S. 58, Z. 1558: ‚ealdsweord eotenisc ecgum þyhtig‘.

⁴⁹ *Beowulf*, hrsg. Klaeber, S. 59, Z. 1560–61: ‚... hit wæs mære ðonne ænig mon oðer / tō beadulāce ætberan meahte‘.

⁵⁰ *Beowulf*, hrsg. Klaeber, S. 58, Z. 1545–49. Die Übersetzung entstammt *Beowulf und das Finnsburg Bruchstück*, übertr. Felix Genzmer, Universal-Bibliothek 430/30a (Stuttgart, 1953; Repr. 1978), S. 53. Genzmers Übersetzung behält die Alliteration bei und ist nicht wortgetreu; sie vermittelt den Sinn des Originals mehr oder weniger korrekt.

⁵¹ Joseph Bosworth und T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford, 1898; Repr. 1980), S. 853–54.

⁵² *Beowulf: An Edition*, hrsg. Mitchell und Robinson (wie Anm. 47), S. 289; *Beowulf: A Student Edition*, hrsg. George Jack (Oxford, 1994), S. 120.

Glossaren zu ihren Editionen dem Leser die Wahl zwischen ‚knife‘ und ‚short sword‘.⁵³

Felix Genzmer übersetzt *seax* mit ‚Messer‘, ohne dass ihn Stabreimzwang dazu genötigt hätte. Ein Messer, ein beispielsweise in der Küche verwendbares Gerät, dürfte wohl eher in die Hand eines weiblichen Wesens passen als ein Dolch oder Schwert. Die das Wort *seax* begleitenden Adjektive in Zeile 1546, *brād* und *brūnecg*, schließen ein Messer nicht aus: *brād* bedeutet ‚breit‘, *brūnecg* ‚mit brauner (glänzender) Schneide‘.

Einen Erfolg hat Grendels Mutter bereits eher erlebt. Sie rächt sich nach dem von Beowulf bewirkten Tode Grendels, indem sie Beowulfs Gefährten Æschere aus Heorot mitnimmt. Dies geschieht offenbar ohne eigentliche Waffen, denn schnell ergreift sie einen Helden, bevor sie Heorot verlässt: ‚hraðe hēo æðelinga āne hæfde / fæste befangen, þā hēo tō fenne gang‘.⁵⁴ Ebenso gelingt es ihr, Beowulf mit bloßen Händen, das heißt mit ihren schrecklichen Klauen (*atolan clommum*),⁵⁵ in ihre Gewalt zu bringen und ihn in ihre Höhle mitzuführen.

Mit dem in der Höhle befindlichen (magischen) Schwert tötet Beowulf Grendels Mutter und enthauptet er danach Grendel, der bereits der bei einem früheren Kampf mit Beowulf erhaltenen schweren Verwundung erlegen ist. Die Tatsache, dass Grendels Mutter das Schwert nicht benutzt, könnte ein Indiz sein, dass die Benutzung dieser besonderen Waffe nicht nur viel Kraft erfordert, sondern auch das richtige Geschlecht, nämlich das männliche. Dass dieses Schwert keine normale Waffe ist, geht daraus hervor, dass die Klinge sich im Blut von Grendel und seiner Mutter auflöst; in Zeile 1607b heißt es zum Wegschmelzen der Klinge: ‚þæt wæs wundra sum‘.⁵⁶ Dass Grendels Mutter das Schwert nicht benutzt hat, kann also auch damit zusammenhängen, dass sie um die übernatürliche Beschaffenheit dieser Waffe gewusst hat.

Judith, die mit dem Schwert erfolgreiche Frau, gehört zur jüdisch-christlichen Tradition. Die Hauptperson der altenglischen Dichtung *Judith* ist eine Einzelgestalt in der frühen germanischsprachigen Überlieferung. Während die Helden der germanischen Heldendichtung mit

⁵³ *Beowulf*, hrsg. Klaeber (wie Anm. 46), S. 395; *Beowulf, with the Finnesburg Fragment*, hrsg. C. L. Wrenn, 2. bearb. und erw. Aufl. (London, 1958; Repr. 1969), S. 285.

⁵⁴ *Beowulf*, hrsg. Klaeber, S. 49, Z. 1294–95; *Beowulf*, übertr. Genzmer (wie Anm. 50), S. 47: ‚Eilend der Edlinge einen / hatte sie, als zum Fenn sie floh, / fest ergriffen‘.

⁵⁵ *Beowulf*, hrsg. Klaeber, S. 56, Z. 1502a.

⁵⁶ *Beowulf*, hrsg. Klaeber, S. 60, Z. 1607b; *Beowulf*, übertr. Genzmer, S. 54: ‚Das schien ein Wunder‘. Die altenglische Form *wæs* ist ein Indikativ; daher würde in einer Prosa-Übersetzung ‚Das war etwas Übernatürliches‘ oder ‚Das war ein Wunder‘ wohl besser passen.

einheimischem Stoff ihre Taten um der eigenen Ehre willen bzw. zu Ehren von Verwandten oder irdischen Vorgesetzten vollführen, vollbringt Judith in der nach ihr benannten altenglischen Dichtung ihre gewagte Tat zur Ehre Gottes. Aus einigen oben zur Sprache gebrachten Textbeispielen wird deutlich, dass Frauen in der germanisch-vorchristlichen Tradition auf Schwerter am besten verzichten, da die von ihnen mit Waffen vorgenommenen Aktionen misslingen oder ihrem Ruf schaden oder sogar letztendlich den Täterinnen selber fatal werden. In der altherkömmlichen Gesellschaftsordnung der germanischen Volksstämme sind nur Männer waffenfähig, wenn sie wenigstens gewissen Anforderungen genügen.⁵⁷ Frauen sind waffenunfähig, und es ist also nicht erstaunlich, dass in der *Gíslasaga* Thordis mit dem Schwert weniger Erfolg hat als Aud mit dem Geldbeutel oder dem Knüppel oder dass im *Beowulf* Grendels Mutter zum Messer, nicht aber zum Schwert greift.

⁵⁷ Siehe H.-W. Strätz, ‚Waffenfähigkeit‘ und ‚Waffenrecht‘, in *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte*, hrsg. Adalbert Erler, Ekkehard Kaufmann und Dieter Werkmüller, Bd. 5 (Berlin, 1998), Sp. 1078–79 bzw. 1080–83.

FEMALE VOICES FROM THE OTHERWORLD:
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE EARLY IRISH *ECHTRAÍ*

Karin E. Olsen

Is amhlaid do bi an ingin 7 brat uaine ændatha uimpe cona cimais dergsnáithi dergoir 7 leine do sroll derg re geilchneas, 7 da mhælasa findruine uimpe 7 folt mæth buidhe fuirre 7 rosg glás ana cind 7 ded dathalaind 7 bél tana derg 7 dá fabra dubha 7 lamha dírga datháille, 7 corp sneachtaighi sithgeal aice, 7 gluine corra ceindbeca 7 troi[gh]thi tana tógghaighi co mbuaigh crotha 7 ndenta 7 ndátha 7 ndruineachais 7 ba halaind eidighach an ingin sin .i. ingin Eogain Indbir. Ach mad æn-ní nirbha dingbhala dochum airdrigh Eirenn ben arna hindarba trina mígním fein.

Thus was the maiden. She had a green cloak of one colour about her, with a fringe of red thread of red gold, and a red satin smock against her white skin, and sandals of *findruine* on her, and soft, yellow hair, and a grey eye in her head, and lovely-coloured teeth, and thin red lips, black eyebrows, arms straight and fair of hue, a snowy white body, small round knees, and slender choice feet, with excellence of shape, and form, and complexion, and accomplishments. Fair was the attire of that maiden, even Eogan Inbir's daughter. One thing only, however, a woman was not worthy of the high-king of Ireland who was banished for her own misdeed.¹

This is a description of Bécuma Cneisgel from the Land of Promise in the Middle Irish *Eachtra Airt meic Cuind ocus Tochmarc Delbchaim Ingine Morgain* ('The Adventure of Art, Son of Conn and the Wooing of Delbchaim, daughter of Morgan'). Beautiful and seductive, Otherworld women like Bécuma feature prominently in the early Irish *echtraí* ('adventures'). In some tales, they visit their chosen royal hero in his world and invite him to theirs, an invitation that he (eventually) accepts; in other tales, their first encounter with the hero takes place in the supernatural realm. The hero's sojourn in the Otherworld—which may be located in a cave, mound, beneath the sea or on an island—always has a major impact on the hero's life. In fact, in all but two *echtraí* he stays with his female companion in her world or his whereabouts remain uncertain.

¹ R. I. Best, ed. and trans., '*Eachtra Airt meic Cuind 7 Tochmarc Delbchaim Ingine Morgain*', *Ériu* 3 (1907), 149–73, at 152 (text), 153 (translation).

Who are these attractive ladies? To begin with, they belong to the *aes síde* ('people of the fairy mound') and may indeed be called fairies, although this term does not do justice to their origin, which can be traced back to the sovereignty goddesses. Scholars have repeatedly illustrated that the stock motif of the union of the Otherworld woman with the hero is a literary reflex of the mating of the king with the goddess. Since the Irish saw their land and sovereignty as feminine, the marriage of the king to the sovereignty/territorial goddess, also called *banais righe* ('wedding feast of kingship'), was a prerequisite for the latter's successful rule.² However, the fairies in most *echtraí* have undergone a more or less drastic transformation. As this article will illustrate, their original role as sovereignty goddess is still intact in *Echtrae Chonnlaí* ('The Adventure of Connla') and *Immram Brain* ('The Voyage of Bran') but already somewhat compromised in *Echtrae Nerai* ('The Adventure of Nera'). In *Serglige Con Culainn* ('The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn'), *Echtrae Laegairi meic Crimhthainn* ('The Adventure of Laegaire Mac Crimhthann') and *Eachtra Airt*, however, the sacral character of the desired union has either disappeared or is openly criticised. In spite of their supernatural powers, the women in these three tales are made subordinate to human and supernatural males who determine their fate.

The most straightforward manifestations of the sovereignty goddess occur in two of the earliest witnesses to the tradition. The archetypes of *Echtrae Chonnlaí* and *Immram Brain*, which may date back to the eighth century but which have been transmitted in manuscripts dating from the twelfth century and later,³ tell how a mysterious woman visits the hero

² In *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ('The Book of the Takings of Ireland'), the three goddesses Ériu, Banba, and Fodla of the Túatha Dé Danann successively meet the poet Armaingín of the Gaels (or 'Sons of Míl'), who belongs to the last population that invaded Ireland, and force the poet to name Ireland after them. Ireland still has the three names today, Éirenn (< Ériu) being the most well-known one. For a discussion of the king's marriage to the territorial goddess, see, for example, James MacKillop, *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford and New York, 1998), sv; Patrick Ford, 'Celtic Women: The Opposing Sex', *Viator* 19 (1988), 416–33, esp. 424–27; Proinsias Mac Cana, 'Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Irish Literature', *Études Celtiques* 7 (1955–56), 76–114, 356–413, and *Études Celtiques* 8 (1958–59), 59–65.

³ In his edition of *Echtrae Chonnlaí*, Kim McCone uses linguistic evidence to illustrate that the closest witnesses to the eighth-century archetypes of *Echtrae Chonnlaí* and *Immram Brain* are the texts in the mid-fourteenth-century Yellow Book of Lecan. McCone argues further that the texts in the early twelfth-century *Lebor na hUidre* derive from later, tenth-century versions of the two tales. Séamus Mac Mathúna postulates ninth- and eleventh-century dates for the two nodes of *Immram Brain*. Kim McCone, ed. and trans., *Echtrae Chonnlaí and the Beginnings of Vernacular Narrative Writing in Ireland: a Critical*

in his familiar surroundings, asking him to go with her to the Otherworld. In *Immram Brain*, Bran hears music behind him, falls asleep and, once awake again, finds a silver branch with white blossoms beside him.⁴ When he takes the branch to his palace, he is approached by a woman who sings twenty-nine quatrains to him. In her song, she praises the merits of the Otherworld, such as everlasting youth, joy, prosperity and beautiful women, and then announces the birth of Christ.⁵ Bran leaves Ireland with twenty-six companions on the next day and after another two days he meets the god Manannán mac Lir, who is driving his chariot across the ocean. Manannán tells Bran that the sea on which Bran is rowing is the Otherworld, i.e. *Mag Mell* ('Pleasant Plain'), which has remained unaffected by sin. Manannán also declares that he will beget Mongán mac Fiachnae in Ireland, describes the Fall and, like the woman before him, prophesises the coming of Christ. After another short delay at the *Inis Subai* ('Island of Joy'), Bran finally reaches *Tír inna mBan* ('The Land of Women'), where he encounters a band of women. Their leader not only draws the hesitating Bran to the shore with a magical ball of thread but also keeps him and his crew on the island for many years. When Bran desires to go home, she lets him go but warns him not to touch Irish soil. Bran returns to Ireland, one of his crew members leaps out of the boat and immediately turns to dust. Bran learns that his voyage has become part of the ancient tales and, not being able to disembark, tells the people of Ireland of his adventures and departs never to be seen again.

Edition with Introduction, Notes, Bibliography and Vocabulary, Maynooth Medieval Irish Texts 1 (Maynooth, 2000, pp. 11–47); Séamus Mac Mathúna, ed. and trans., *Immram Brain: Bran's Journey to the Land of Women* (Tübingen, 1985), pp. 1–27.

⁴ I use the traditional title *Immram Brain* even though it has many characteristics of an *echtrae* and is therefore discussed as such in this article. In fact, David Dumville has called the tale *Echtrae Brain*, a title that occurs in a twelfth-century Irish tale list. Unlike the traditional *immrama* (*Immram curaig Máele Duin*, *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla*, *Immram curaig Ua Corra*), the tale does not focus on the sea-journey of the protagonist(s) and his/their visits to many islands but on Bran's encounter with the sea god Manannán mac Lir. Although the woman speaks of one hundred and fifty islands in the western sea, Bran only comes across one island, *Inis Subai* ('Island of Joy') before he arrives in the Land of Women. David Dumville, 'Echtrae and immram: Some Problems of Definition', *Ériu* 27 (1976), 73–94. For a discussion of the tale lists, see Rudolf Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum 17. Jahrhundert* (Halle, 1921; repr. Hildesheim and New York, 1980), pp. 21–24. All references to the text are to Séamus Mac Máthúna's edition.

⁵ In the prose text of *Immram Brain*, fifty quatrains are mentioned. Similarly, Manannán is credited with fifty quatrains although he sings only twenty-eight. It is debatable if any more stanzas ever existed.

Much has been written on possible vestiges of a native tradition in this tale. James Carney denies any such claims and argues that *Immram Brain* 'is, from beginning to end, a thoroughly Christian poem. It seems, in fact, to be an allegory showing Man setting out on the voyage to Paradise'.⁶ That the poem in its extant form was produced in a Christian literary setting is confirmed by the two announcements of Christ's birth.⁷ In addition, John Carey has convincingly argued that the very concept of the overseas Otherworld did not form part of the Irish or Welsh native tradition.⁸ In spite of this strong evidence, however, it would be rash not to allow the native influences demonstrated by Proinsias Mac Cana. According to Mac Cana, the Christian poet conceived the pagan Otherworld in terms of man's condition before the Fall. Sinlessness in the Otherworld cannot be equated with chastity; instead, *Immram Brain* advocates sexual pleasure without sin.⁹ More important for the present analysis is Mac Cana's claim that the women in *Tír inna Ban* are manifestations of the Celtic goddesses:

To begin with, a vast area of Irish mythology, and particularly that part of it most intimately concerned with the land of Ireland, its physical features, and its fertility, is dominated by the great figure of the goddess in whose dispensation lay such basic issues as peace and war, prosperity and sovereignty. It is hardly surprising then that she should sometimes be thought of as dominating the Otherworld realm to the virtual exclusion of the gods. It is an enduring aspect of the Irish notion of the supernatural: the woman who invited Bran and Conlae to the Land of Women can hardly be dissociated from those goddesses, such as Áine and Aoibheall and Clíodna, whose fairy dwellings constituted familiar landmarks in the Irish countryside and whose traditions flourished until recently among the local populations. Nor can they be dissociated from the corresponding goddesses of British traditions, Rhiannon, for example, in medieval Welsh literature and Morgain la Fée in Arthurian romance... It is true that the Irish goddess is not always

⁶ James Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (Dublin, 1955), p. 282.

⁷ Carney (*Studies*, pp. 283–85) also illustrates that the woman's description of the Otherworld has many similarities with the descriptions of the phoenix and its paradisaical surroundings in Lactantius's poem *De ave phoenice*. But see Proinsias Mac Cana, 'Mongán mac Fiachna and *Immram Brain*', *Ériu* 23 (1972), 102–42, at 122–23. Mac Cana raises the possibility that certain elements in the description of the Otherworld, such as the singing birds, are indigenous.

⁸ John Carey, 'The Location of the Otherworld in the Irish tradition', *Éigse* 19.1 (1982), 36–43; repr. in *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature: an Anthology of Criticism*, ed. Jonathan M. Wooding (Dublin, 2000), pp. 113–19. Carey points out that *Immram Brain* and *Echtrae Chonnlaí* are the only two early Irish tales featuring such an overseas Otherworld.

⁹ Proinsias Mac Cana, 'The Sinless Otherworld of *Immram Brain*', *Ériu* 27 (1976); repr. in *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature*, pp. 52–72, at pp. 57–64.

as seductive as in *Immram Brain* or *Echtrae Chonlai*—as goddess of war and destruction she can be as ugly and malevolent as she is otherwise benign and beautiful, and indeed one aspect is but the obverse of the other—but naturally where the narrative has to do with the Happy Otherworld it is the bounteous and sensual element that prevails.¹⁰

In *Immram Brain*, a fairy woman initiates Bran's voyage to the Land of Women, where he finally meets the (fairy) leader of the island. Although it is not clear whether the two women are identical, both appear to be genuine manifestations of the same sovereignty goddess, here depicted as autonomous and always in control of events. When the leader of the Land of Women allows Bran to leave, she does so with the knowledge that he will not be able to disembark on Irish soil. Bran can only choose between returning to her island or traversing the seas endlessly, and even this choice is not important. If the mating of the royal Bran and the woman is an echo of the mating of the king and the goddess, here transposed into the Otherworld, Bran is replaceable. Sovereignty will simply have a new mate.

In *Echtrae Chonnlaí*, the Otherworld woman also seeks out a royal figure, Conn Cetchatach's son Connla, on the Hill of Usnech. According to medieval Irish tradition, Conn was High King of Ireland, the Hill of Usnech the centre of Ireland. Connla is the chosen mate and in fact the only one present on the Hill of Usnech who can both see and hear the fairy:

[2] As:bert Connle: 'Can do:dehad-so, a banscál?'

[3] Mulier respondit:

'Do:dehad-sa a tírib, béo i-nna:bí bás na peccad imarmus.

Do:melom fleda búana cen frithghnam.

Cáincomrac lenn cen debuid.

Síd mór i:taam, conid de suidib no-n:ainmnigther áes síde.'

[4] 'Cía ad:gláiter?'ol Conn Cétchathach. Ní:acci nech in mnaí acht Connle a óenur.

[5] Mulier respondit:

'Ad:gládadar mnaí n-oic n-álaind sochenéoil

nad:fresci bás na sentaid.

Ro:carus Connle Rúad.

Co-t:ngairim do Maig Meld

inid rí Bóadag banithsuthain

cen gol cen mairg inna thír

ó gabais flaith.

Tair lemm,

¹⁰ Mac Cana, 'The Sinless Otherworld' (see above, n. 9), pp. 68–69.

a Chonnlai Rúaid muinbrioc caindildeirc.
 Barr buide for-dut:tá óas gnúis chorcordai,
 bid ordan do rígdelbae.
 Ma cho-tum:éitis, ní:crínfa do delbae oítiu áilde
 co bráth mbrindach'.¹¹

Connlae said: 'Whence have you come, O woman?' The woman replied: 'I have come from (the) lands of (the) living, in which there is neither death nor sin nor transgression (/original sin). We consume (ever)lasting feasts without service (exertion). (There is) harmony with us without strife. (It is) [a] great [fairy-mound]/peace [*síd*] in which we are so that it is from these we are called people of the [fairy-mound]/peace [*aes síde*']'.¹² 'Who are you talking to?' said Conn of the Hundred Battles. No one saw the woman but Connlae alone. The woman replied: 'He is talking to a young, beautiful woman of good family who does not expect death or old age. I have loved Connlae the Ruddy. I summon him to the Plain of Delights in which Bóadag the everlasting is king without grief, without woe in his land since he assumed sovereignty. Come with me, O speckled-necked, candle-red Connlae the Ruddy. The yellow head of hair which is upon you above a purplish face, it will be a distinction of your kingly appearance (/form). If you come with me the youth (and) beauty of your appearance (/form) will not perish until dream-laden judgement'.

Although Conn's druid makes the fairy's voice inaudible by means of a magic spell, he is not able to defeat her. She throws a magic apple to Connla, which becomes his only food. After a month she returns to the love-sick Connla and his father on Mag Arcommín. When Conn calls for his druid again, she reproaches him:

[11] As:bert in en la sodain:
 A Chuinn Chétchathaig,
 druídecht ní-s:grádaigther,
 ar is bec ro:saig for mesu
 artrag máir firíán connil
 muinteraib ilib adamraib.
 Mo-tub:ticfa a recht.
 Con:scéra brichtu druad tárdechto
 ar bélaib demuin duib dolbthig'.¹³

¹¹ McCone, ed., *Echtrae Chonnlai* (see above, n. 3), p. 121. All references to *Echtrae Chonnlai* are to McCone's edition. Translations are also McCone's unless otherwise indicated. The translation of this first quote, together with discussions of the individual sentences, appears on pages 130–40.

¹² The terms in the square brackets are my additions. McCone allows only the meaning 'peace' for *síd*, an interpretation that I do not share. See below.

¹³ McCone, ed., *Echtrae Chonnlai* (see above, n. 3), p. 122. Translation on pp. 174–81.

Thereupon the woman said: 'O Conn of the Hundred Battles, do not love druidry. It is in a little while that the Great High King's righteous (and) decent one will reach your judgements with many wondrous followers. His law will soon come to you. He will destroy the spells of the druids of base teaching in front of the black, bewitching Devil'.

The woman's rejection of druidism and her prophecy of the arrival of Christianity clearly reflect the monastic context in which the text was composed.¹⁴ Still, one does not have to go so far as to agree with Kim McCone that the woman both represents the Church and prefigures St Patrick, who also had to defeat the monarch's druids in Muirchú's *Vita Patricii*.¹⁵ McCone believes that the expectations of a sovereignty goddess's presence are raised only to be frustrated; however, he overlooks the fact that the woman has retained the seductive nature of the goddess. A major crux is the interpretation of *síd*, which can mean 'peace' or 'fairy mound' in the text. While McCone opts for the first meaning, Tomás Ó Cathasaigh has argued for a pun: the people of the *síd* are also people of peace, since peace is an essential though not inevitable element in the native concept of the Otherworld.¹⁶ Carey, furthermore, states:

The tale opens with a scene deriving from an inherited tradition of Otherworld narratives; but when the supernatural woman begins to speak, her language is that of the ecclesiastical culture of homily and exegesis, and she describes her home as if it were the Christian Paradise. Now this twist is counterbalanced by another. Invoking the peace of the hereafter, she uses it as a verbal bridge back to native tradition: *síd* 'peace' is equated with the *síd* inhabited by the *aes síde*. What is involved is not merely a confluence of secular and clerical elements, but the adroit and self-conscious manipulation of their contrasts and similarities.¹⁷

Carey regards *Echtrae Chonnlaí* as the earliest attempt to rationalise the Irish belief in fairies: the notion of Mag Mell is indigenous, as is the name of the Otherworld king.¹⁸ The Otherworld lady forms no exception.

¹⁴ Mac Cana ('Sinless Otherworld', see above, n. 9, pp. 53–55) distinguishes between the Otherworld as an expression of benign paganism and druidism as an expression of the malignant variant. This solution further reinforces the fusion of Christian and native notions in the conception of the Otherworld.

¹⁵ McCone, *Echtrae Chonnlaí* (see above, n. 3), pp. 86–87, 105.

¹⁶ Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, 'The Semantics of "Síd"', *Éigse* 17 (1977–79), 137–55, at 138–39. For the concept of a not so peaceful Otherworld, see below.

¹⁷ John Carey, 'The Rhetoric of *Echtrae Chonnlaí*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 30 (1995), 39–65, at 47.

¹⁸ Carey ('Location of the Otherworld', see above, n. 8, pp. 115–17) also speculates that the original text did not contain any reference to a crystal boat or a sea-voyage; rather,

Her appearance and behaviour recall the older concept of the sovereignty goddess although it has been fused with that of a saint.

In *Immram Brain* and *Echtrae Chonnlaí*, the fairies have retained the characteristics of the sovereignty goddess, who leads the hero to her idyllic world. In *Echtrae Nerai*, a structurally complex tale probably from the tenth century, both the Otherworld and its inhabitants resemble the human world with all its imperfections.¹⁹ The story begins with a challenge by Ailill, King of Connaught, on Samain night (1 November), the liminal time when the two worlds are interpenetrable. He asks his warriors to tie a wither around the feet of a recently hanged captive, but only Nera is able to do so. The captive then asks Nera to carry him on his back and find him a drink. Nera succeeds but when he returns to Cruachan, Ailill's residence, he sees the fortress devastated by the people of the *síd* of Cruachan. Having followed the Otherworld army into the cave, he meets their king, who makes him carry firewood and assigns a single woman to him. This Otherworld woman becomes his helper and mate; she explains that the attack he saw will only happen on the next feast of Samain and tells him to warn his people. Nera does this and is told by Ailill to take his possessions out of the *síd* before Ailill's attack next Samain. When he returns to the *síd* after a year, she has born him a son called Aingen, to whom she has given a cow. The cow is stolen by the Morrígan and impregnated by the Donn Cuailnge, the very bull that becomes the object of strife between the Connaught- and Ulstermen in *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. Nera returns to Ráth Cruachan and spends a year there. When he takes his cattle out of the *síd* three days before Samain, the calf which the cow has borne in the meantime bellows and challenges the white bull Finnbennach. The calf is killed but its last bellow challenges Finnbennach to fight with the Donn, evoking an oath from Queen Medb of Connaught not to sleep or eat before seeing the two bulls fight. On Samain night the Connaughtmen destroy the *síd* and kill its inhabitants, but Nera decides to remain in the Otherworld.²⁰

the Otherworld was perceived in a parallel realm not physically separated from the human realm.

¹⁹ Kuno Meyer, ed. and trans., '*Echtra Nerai*', *Révue Celtique* 10 (1889), 212–28.

²⁰ Nera's two return visits to Cruachan and the somewhat incoherent narrative of *Echtrae Nerai* have caused Rudolf Thurneysen to regard the tale as the product of two combined parallel texts (*Die irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum 17. Jahrhundert* [see above, n. 4], pp. 311–12). This view has been challenged by John Carey and Alden Watson, who stress the thematic unity of the whole narrative. See John Carey, 'Sequence and Causation

The Otherworld depicted in *Echtrae Neraí* shares some features with *Immram Brain* and *Echtrae Chonnlaí*. For instance, time functions differently in the human world and in the *síd* of Cruachan: as Carey has illustrated, we witness a logical sequence of events in the Otherworld, which breaks down when Nera returns to his people.²¹ In addition, Nera reports to Ailill after his second return:

‘Roua a tirib cainib’, ol Neri, ‘co setuib ocus muinib moruib, *co nn-imboth* bruilt ocus biid ocus set n-ingnad. Doragut du *for n-orccuin* oidqi hsamnoi dotæt, mano foillsigter doib’.²²

‘I was in fair lands’, said Nera, ‘with great treasures and precious things, with plenty of garments and food, and of wonderful treasures. They will come to slay you on Halloween coming, unless it had been revealed to you’.

Life in the *síd* clearly includes the enjoyment of treasure, food and drink and beautiful clothing. At the same time, however, Nera’s last statement also suggests that the Otherworld in *Echtra Neraí* is not the paradisaical destination that Bran and Conla are able to experience. Mortality, aggression and bad kingship characterise this world. According to Alden Watson, it is the king’s bad rule that brings about the destruction of the *síd*.²³ He allows Nera to infiltrate his people and even gives him a wife (although he later complains about their sexual union without his knowledge). His crown, here a symbol of his sovereignty, is mostly hidden in a well and guarded by two men, one blinded, the other made lame. The crippling of the two guardians is also symbolic: it reflects the king’s mistrust and injustice, while their imperfections become the imperfections of his reign. In other words, the success of his kingship is assessed in terms of a value system prominent in early Irish society, which very much emphasised the importance of the *fír flathemon* or ‘king’s justice’.²⁴

The notion of a just king occurs in legal texts, which treat violations of *fír flathemon*, as well as in wisdom literature. In the late seventh-century *Audacht Morainn* (‘The Testament of Morann’) a prosperous reign is directly connected to the ruler’s justice:

in *Echtra Neraí*, *Ériu* 39 (1988), 67–74; Alden Watson, ‘A Structural Analysis of *Echtra Neraí*’, *Études Celtiques* 23 (1986), 129–42.

²¹ Carey, ‘Sequence and Causation’, 68–69.

²² Meyer, ed., ‘*Echtra Neraí*’, (see above, n. 19), p. 224; translation on p. 225.

²³ Alden Watson, ‘A Structural Analysis’ (see above, n. 20), 134–36.

²⁴ Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Early Irish Law Series 3 (Dublin, 1988), pp. 18–21.

§ 12 Apair fris, is tre fīr flathemon mortlithi (mórslóg no) márlóchet di doínib dingbatar.

§ 13 Is tre fīr flathemon conid (?) márhúatha mármóini midethar.

§ 14 Is tre f. fl. fo-síd sámi sube soad sádili -sláini.

§ 15 Is tre f. fl. ath- (mór)cathu fri crícha comnámat -cuirethar.

§ 16 Is tre f. fl. cech comarbe con a chlí ina chainorbu clanda.

§ 17 Is tre f. fl. ad- manna mármeso márfedo -mlasetar.

§ 18 Is tre f. fl. ad- mlechti márbóis -móinigtear.

§ 19 Is tre f. fl. ro- bbí(?) cech etho ardósil imbeth.

§ 20 Is tre f. fl. to- aidble (uisce) éisc I sruthaib -snáither.

§ 21 Is tre f. fl. clanda caini cain-tussimter. (deraib dethe)

§ 12 Tell him, it is through the justice of the ruler that plagues [and] great lightnings are kept from the people.

§ 13 It is through the justice of the ruler that he judges great tribes [and] great riches.

§ 14 It is through the justice of the ruler that he secures peace, tranquillity, joy, ease, [and] comfort.

§ 15 It is through the justice of the ruler that he dispatches (great) battalions to the borders of hostile neighbours.

§ 16 It is through the justice of the ruler that every heir plants his house-post in his fair inheritance.

§ 17 It is through the justice of the ruler that abundances of great tree-fruit of the great wood are tasted.

§ 18 It is through the justice of the ruler that milk-yields of great cattle are maintained (?).

§ 19 It is through the justice of the ruler that there is (?) abundance of every high, tall corn.

§ 20 It is through the justice of the ruler that abundance of fish swim in streams.

§ 21 It is through the justice of the ruler that fair children are well begotten. (with tears (?) of...?)²⁵

Just as the *síd* king is a bad ruler according to early Irish perceptions, Nera's nameless consort satisfies the requirements of a good wife. The woman is given to Nera by her king, she becomes her husband's helper and even sides with him against her own people. Such behaviour finds its parallel in early Irish society where a woman's male kinsmen negotiated her marriage and where the woman, if she was the chief wife, was put under the rule of her husband.²⁶ Still, her prophetic insights and her

²⁵ Edition and translation by Fergus Kelly, *Audacht Morainn* (Dublin, 1976), pp. 6–7. Cross references to later versions have been omitted.

²⁶ Irish men had often more than one wife. A concubine could choose whom she wished as her guardian: her son, kinsmen or husband. Kelly, *A Guide* (see above, n. 24), p. 71.

temporarily autonomous behaviour during her husband's absence betray her originally divine character. Most likely she is an adapted version of the sovereignty goddess whose union with the king of the Otherworld has come to an end because of the latter's injustice. Nera, now a liminal figure who does not belong to the mortal world any longer, becomes her new mate. As in *Immram Brain* and *Echtrae Connlai*, the sacral marriage is transposed into the Otherworld, only that the Otherworld in *Echtrae Nerai* is a distorted reflection of what the hero has left behind.

The role of sovereignty is even more circumscribed in *Serglige Con Culainn*, a composite text which consists of the combined parts of two versions from the ninth and eleventh century respectively.²⁷ Here the hero, Cú Chulainn, is desired by the beautiful and pure Fann ('Tear'), who has been abandoned by Manannán. He first encounters her and her sister Lí Ban ('Beauty of Women') at Samain. The two women are in bird shape, but when he tries to catch them, he fails. His next encounter with Fann and Lí Ban is in a vision: they horsewhip him so severely that he cannot move or speak for a year. At the end of the year, he is first visited by Óengus, son of Áed Abrat of the Otherworld and brother of Fann and Lí Ban, and later by Lí Ban herself, who speaks on behalf of her husband Labraid Lúathlám ar Claideb ('Labraid Quick-hand on Sword'). She reports that Labraid wishes to give Fann to Cú Chulainn in return for one day's fighting against his enemies. Cú Chulainn's charioteer Lóg goes with her to an Otherworld island, hears Labraid and reports back to his master. When Cú Chulainn does not move, he is incited by his wife Emer; still, it is Lóg who goes for a second time because Cú does not want to follow Lí Ban's invitation. Not Lí Ban's but Lóg's seductive description of the Otherworld with its idyllic landscape, wealth, beautiful women and other pleasures changes the hero's mind. He kills Labraid's enemies and sleeps with Fann, with whom he stays for a month. The couple decide to meet again at Ibar Cind

²⁷ The tale occurs in *Lebor na hUidre*. The section called *Briatharthe cosce Con Culainn* 'The Wisdom Sayings of Cú Chulainn' (§§ 25–26) constitutes a separate episode that John Carey assigns to the redactor of the parts of the eleventh-century version. In this episode, Cú Chulainn instructs his foster-son Lugaid Réoderg, who has been chosen High King of Ireland, on the practices of a just ruler. John Carey, 'The Uses of Tradition in *Serglige Con Culainn*', in *Ulidia, Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales*, ed. J. P. Mallory and G. Stockman (Belfast, 1994), pp. 77–84, at p. 82. For a detailed analysis of the composition of the tale together with a review of the earlier views by Zimmer and Thurneysen, see Myles Dillon, 'On the text of *Serglige Con Culainn*', *Éigse* 3 (1941), 120–29, and his editions, *Serglige Con Culainn* (Columbus, OH, 1941), pp. v–viii (edition with a translation, notes and vocabulary) and *Serglige Con Culainn* (Dublin, 1953; repr. 1975), pp. ix–xiii.

Tráchtá, but their tryst is disturbed by the jealous Emer. Cú Chulainn prevents Emer from killing Fann but cannot choose between the two women. Fann makes the choice for him by yielding to her rival and then utters a long lament. Since Cú Chulainn is totally distraught when he loses Fann and since Emer has not been cured of her jealousy, Conchobar's druids administer a drink of forgetfulness to them. The tale concludes with the return of Manannán, who takes his wife back and shakes his cloak between the two lovers so that they will never meet again.

Fann and Lí Ban dominate Cú Chulainn only to a limited extent. True, their near-fatal beating of the hero, which results in his one-year debility, demonstrates their superiority to him. Fann's love for Cú Chulainn and her dispatch of messengers to secure his love, furthermore, parallel the invitation of the two women in *Immram Brain* and *Echtrae Chonnlaí*. But here the similarities end. Even if Fann's invitation reminds us of the sovereignty goddess seeking out the hero, her actions and those of Lí Ban are severely circumscribed.²⁸ Lí Ban's revelation that Labraid will give Fann to Cú Chulainn for his services makes both women subordinate to one man: Lí Ban presents herself as her husband's messenger and Fann's desires are subordinated to her brother-in-law's. In a similar vein, Cú Chulainn, unlike Bran and Connla, does not want to accept the invitation of a woman, however attractive her description of the Otherworld might be, and Lóeg is forced to go for a second time. Only when Lóeg reports back and tells Cú Chulainn about the idyllic Otherworld as well as the perfect Fann does Cú Chulainn agree to go; he clearly needs the advice of an intimate male companion rather than that of a fairy.

At the end of the tale, Fann loses her lover. Like the leader of the Land of Women in *Immram Brain*, she allows Cú Chulainn to go back to his world but turns out unsuccessful in her rivalry with Emer, who has the better arguments:

43. 'Bés,' ar Emer, 'nocon err in ben dia lenai. Acht chena is álaind cech nderg, is gel cach núa, is caín cech ard, is serb cach gnáth. Cáid cech n-écmais, is faill cech n-aichnid, co festar cach n-éolas. A gillai,' are sí, 'ro báamarni fecht co

²⁸ Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin ('*Serglige Con Culainn: A Possible Reinterpretation*', in *Ulidia 2: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tale, Maynooth 24–27 June 2005*, ed. Ruairí Ó hUiginn and Brian Ó Catháin [An Sagart, 2009], pp. 344–55) emphasises Fann's and Lí Ban's sexual power over Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn temporarily loses his virility when beaten by the two women in his world but recovers from his sexual inertia in the Otherworld.

cátaid acut, 7 no bemmis dorísi diambad áil duitsiu.' Ocus robo dograch furri. 'Dar ar mbréthir trá,' ar sé, 'isatt áilsiu damsá 7 bidat áil hi céin bat béo.

43. 'Perhaps,' said Emer, 'the woman thou followest is not better than I. However, all that glitters is beautiful, all that is new is bright, all that is lacking is delightful, all that is familiar is neglected, till all be known. Lad,' said she, 'thou hadst us once in dignity together, and we should be so again if thou didst desire it.' And she was sad. 'On my word,' said he, 'I desire thee, and I shall desire thee as long as though livest!'²⁹

Emer's observation that Fann's novelty will wear off places Fann firmly in a human context. In the end, Emer indicates that Fann is not better than any other mortal woman. And Fann reacts like a mortal woman. Once she hears that Cú Chulainn will always desire Emer, she resigns though not without making two long laments. In fact, Fann's name becomes particularly relevant at this point. Although in the tale it is rendered as 'tear' with the explanation that she was given the name for her purity and beauty,³⁰ *fann* also means 'weak'.³¹ This second meaning together with 'tear' as an expression of sorrow may very well foreshadow her suffering, which is ended—not surprisingly—by a male character. It is now Manannán's task to take her back like a lost child and make sure that she will not err again. Fann has finally been silenced.

Fann's resignation may have been a feature of the original tale, but it could also have been the work of the Christian author of its eleventh-century version. The author's skeptical backward look, as Carey has shown, is most pronounced in the conclusion of the tale (which belongs to the eleventh century), where the whole adventure is suddenly denounced as a fleeting diabolical vision shown to Cú Chulainn by apparitions that the ignorant people called *side* and *aes síde*.³² Interestingly, Fann's defeat by Emer is part of the Middle Irish version, while the interpretation of the name 'Fann' as an expression of purity and beauty occurs in a portion of the text that belongs to the ninth century. It is certainly conceivable that the eleventh-century author wished to further weaken Fann's original status as sovereignty by playing on her name's double meaning and turning her into a subordinate, docile woman.

²⁹ Dillon, ed. and trans., *Serglige Con Culainn* (see above, n. 27), pp. 24 (text), 45–46 (translation).

³⁰ The meaning 'tear' is given in paragraph 17. See Dillon, ed. and trans., *Serglige Con Culainn*, p. 6.

³¹ Royal Irish Academy, *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, compact edition (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1983), fascicle 'F', pp. 39–40 (*ʔfann*).

³² John Carey, 'The Uses of Tradition' (see above, n. 27), 78–79.

Equally subordinate and even less visible are the two women in *Echtrae Laegairi meic Crimhthainn*, a tale which has been dated by Kenneth Jackson to the late ninth (prose) and the early tenth century (poetry).³³ Laegaire, son of the King Crimthann Cass of Connaught, is asked by the Otherworld king Fiachna mac Rétach to help him in battle against Goll mac Duilb and to recapture the queen, who had been abducted by Goll's uncle Eochaid mac Sáil. Laegaire follows the king to the Otherworld under a lake, defeats the enemy and recovers the lady against her will. He is given Fiachna's daughter Dér Gréine ('Tear of the Sun [dewdrop]') and stays in the Otherworld till the end of the year. When he arrives in Connaught, he is asked by his father to stay. Laegaire, however, declines and returns to the fairy mound (the location of the Otherworld has changed) where he co-rules with Fiachna. He has not been seen again.

The two women play a marginal role in the tale. While Laegaire's marriage with Dér Gréine may be a version of the *banais righe*, no actions or speeches are attributed to her. The marriage reminds us of the union of Nera and the single woman, although in this case not the father but the king makes the arrangements. Fiachna's wife, on the other hand, is an entirely submissive character. Having fallen in love with Eochaidh and then with Goll himself after Eochaid's death, her only function is to lament the loss of these two men. In fact, her lament is contained in one of the somewhat later poems and may have been added to emphasise her victimisation by the relentless males around her.

The late *Eachtra Airt meic Cuind ocus Tochmarc Delbchaime ingine Morgain* is the last tale under discussion. Although it has been preserved only in early Modern Irish in the fifteenth-century Book of Fermoy, it is mentioned in the earlier tale lists and can therefore be grouped with the other *echtraí*.³⁴ The tale begins with the death of Eithne Taebhfada ('Long-side'), wife of King Conn Céthach of Tara, and the expulsion of the attractive Bécuma Cneisgel ('Lady-Form of White Skin'), wife of Labraid Lúathlám ar Claideb, from the Land of Promise. Bécuma committed adultery with Manannán's son Gaidiar and, as punishment, has to go into exile in Ireland. She desires Conn's son Art but ends up marrying Conn. When Art is banished from Ireland for a year at her request, the year turns out to be

³³ Kenneth Jackson, ed. and trans., 'The Adventure of Laeghaire Mac Crimhthainn', *Speculum* 17 (1972), 377–89, at 377–79.

³⁴ For a discussion of the *echtraí* in the tale lists, see Dumville, '*Echtrae* and *immram*' (see above, n. 4), 90–93.

disastrous for Ireland. There is no corn or milk and the druids demand as a remedy the blood of the son of a sinless couple. Conn goes on a quest, meets the boy and brings him back to Ireland, but when the son is to be sacrificed, a woman (his mother) with a cow intervenes. She asks the assembly what the two bags at the cow's side contain, and since nobody can answer the question, demands that the cow be sacrificed instead of the boy. In the bags are a one-legged bird and a twelve-legged bird; once released the former kills the latter. The woman explains that the men of Ireland are the twelve-legged bird, while the boy is the one-legged bird because he possesses the truth. Before departing with her son, she exhorts Conn to expel Bécuma and hang the druids. Conn does not follow the advice, for later Bécuma plays *fidchell* (a type of chess) with Art for stakes. First Bécuma loses and has to produce the warrior's rod of Cú Roí mac Daire. The second game is lost by Art who now has to bring back Delbchaem ('Fair Shape'), daughter of Morgan from the Otherworld. Art departs in his boat and comes to an island where he meets the beautiful Créide Fíralaind ('Truly Beautiful'). She tells him how to reach Morgan's stronghold and overcome the many obstacles and enemies on his way. Art is successful on his quest and, as a final act, kills both Delbchaem's mother Coinchend ('Dog-Head'), daughter of Conchruth ('Dog-Shape'), and her father. Back in Ireland, Delbchaem requests that Bécuma leave Tara before her arrival there. Bécuma departs, Delbchaem is welcomed and Art is asked to tell his adventures.

Brendan O Hehir has divided the tale into two parts: the *Eachtra Airt Meic Cuind* proper and the preceding two sections, which he tentatively calls *Eachtra Cuind Cetchathaig ocus Tochmarc Bécuma*.³⁵ According to O Hehir, only the second part is a revision of the tale mentioned in the lists, i.e. a tale of the quest of an aspirant king for the goddess who will confirm his kingship for a time. The first part, on the other hand, was added by a Christian redactor in order to discredit the older myth. O Hehir conjectures that 1) the wooing of Bécuma is based on a traditional tale of the *Tochmarc Étaíne* type on which the redactor imposed his Christian morals 2) the redactor invented the story of the sinless couple and their triumphant offspring.³⁶ That the sinless boy episode symbolises

³⁵ Brendan O Hehir, 'The Christian Revision of *Eachtra Airt meic Cuind ocus Tochmarc Delbchaine ingine Morgain*', in *Celtic Folklore and Christianity: Studies in Memory of William W. Heist*, ed. Patrick Ford (Santa Barbara, Cal., 1983), pp. 159–79, at p. 160.

³⁶ O Hehir, 'The Christian Revision' (see above, n. 35), pp. 166–68, 173–74.

Christ and the victory of Christianity over the old religion is beyond question and will be dealt with below. More significant at this point is O Hehir's discussion of the other sections of the composite tale. For O Hehir, the wooing of Bécuma could go back to an older tale in which the true goddess is replaced by a successor goddess with dire results. In *Tochmarc Étaíne*, the divine Midir tries to reclaim his reincarnated wife Étaín from King Eochaid. The two contestants play several games of *fidchell* for stakes, of which Eochaid loses the second one. Midir recovers his wife but, in response to Eochaid's destruction of the fairy mounds, offers Eochaid to give her back if the latter can recognise her among fifty identical looking women. When Eochaid selects Étaín's daughter, his rule is doomed, as she is not destined for him but for his successor.³⁷ Similarly, Bécuma cannot replace Conn's wife Eithne Taebhfadha, as she can only sanction the rule of Conn's son. O Hehir concludes that 'Bécuma is the incarnation of the goddess intended for Art, and when she is misappropriated by Conn, she herself is the instigator of Art's quest for her alter ego, Delbchaem'.³⁸

The identification of Bécuma and Delbchaem requires further analysis. If both are manifestations of the same earth goddess who sanctions the king's, here Art's, rule, they could represent the generative and destructive side of the goddess. Sovereignty bestows a kingdom but also takes it away if the king does not uphold *fír flathemon*, as Máire Bhreathnach has illustrated.³⁹ This duality seems to be reinforced by the similar appearance of Bécuma and Delbchaem: both wear a green cloak of one colour, have a grey eye and a snow-white body. Yet Bécuma's adultery and corruption are unique to her. O Hehir acknowledges that her flaws place her in a Christian context, arguing that the '[story's] motivation is anti-pagan, and specifically it seeks to discredit the belief that a king's prosperous reign depends upon the favor of a goddess queen'.⁴⁰ In other words, the redactor appropriated and reshaped the older story in order to expose the flawed nature of *banais righe*. Still, the question remains why he recorded the quest for the goddess in the second half more or less faithfully. These problems disappear if the entire tale is seen as a relatively coherent whole with the episode of the innocent boy at its centre. Both

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 167–68.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 169–70.

³⁹ Máire Bhreathnach, 'The Sovereignty Goddess as Goddess of Death', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 39 (1982), 243–60. Bhreathnach discusses the dual nature of the goddess in the death tales *Aided Muirchertaigh* and *Togail Bruidne De Derga*.

⁴⁰ O Hehir, 'The Christian Revision' (see above, n. 35), p. 179.

the boy and Delbchaem embody the truth that will be victorious, whereas the druids and Bécuma stand for the pagan deception and falsehood that need to be eliminated. In this vein, the promiscuous Bécuma is a perverted earth goddess, who, however, turns out to be as easily defeated as a mortal woman. In fact, men expel her twice: in the beginning Manannán and his people (including her lover!) banish her from the Otherworld; later it is Art who commands her to leave Tara. She goes back to her boat at Ben Édair, but her final destination is not mentioned. She simply vanishes.

Delbchaem is Bécuma's positive opposite: she is beautiful but also, unlike Bécuma, wise and chaste.⁴¹ Although I agree with O Hehir that she is another manifestation of the sovereignty goddess, her autonomy has been reduced to her capacity to counsel her future husband, and it is no coincidence that this strong but subordinate woman is welcomed by the seers, wise men and chiefs of Ireland. As a prefiguration of the new faith, furthermore, she is able to stay in Tara, while both Bécuma and the druids vanish from the narrative. Finally, Créide Fíralaind is an intermediary figure between Bécuma and Delbchaem. Créide has the same function as Nera's wife: she helps the hero with her wise counsel and warnings, thus enabling him to complete his quest successfully. Still, she also disappears once her mission is completed; we could even say that her figure is replaced by Delbchaem, who represents the ideal, saint-like wife.

Of all the *echtraí* discussed in this paper, *Eachtra Airt* offers the most critical view of *banais righe*. However, this does not mean that *banais righe* was not regarded from a Christian perspective in the other tales. In *Serglige Con Culainn*, *Echtrae Laegairi* and *Echtrae Nerai*, the role of the sovereignty goddess is merged with that of a mortal woman subject to the restrictions imposed by a male dominated society. The women in *Echtrae Laegairi* are mute or lament, Fann's desires come second to Labraid's and Cú Chulainn's, and even Nera's wife plays only a secondary role as Nera's helper. Matters are different in *Immram Brain* and *Echtrae Chonn-lai*, where the two fairies are in charge of events, but the special status of these two tales may not be so surprising after all. Whereas the plots of

⁴¹ 'Brat uaine ændatha uimpe, 7 dealg óir isin brat osa bruinde, 7 folt fíralaind forordha fuirre. Da fábra dubha dorchaidhe le rosc glas ruithenta ana cind; corp snechtaighi sithgel aice. Et ba halaind an ingin sin, eter cruth 7 chéill 7 gais 7 gres 7 genus 7 ordarcus' ('She had a green cloak of one hue about her, with a gold pin in it over her breast, and long, fair, very golden hair. She had dark-black eyebrows, and flashing grey eyes in her head, and a snowy-white body. Fair was the maiden both in shape and intelligence, in wisdom and embroidery, in chastity and nobility'). Best, ed. and trans., *Eachtra Airt*, (see above, n. 1), 150 and 151.

Echtrae Nerai, *Serglige Con Culainn* and *Echtrae Laegairi* resist any fusion with Christian ideals, the authors of *Immram Brain* and *Echtrae Chonnlai* were able to merge the concepts of the Otherworld with that of Christian Paradise. The fairies, though manifestations of the sovereignty goddess, could also be seen as heavenly messengers and therefore did not need to be euhemerised, subordinated or silenced. On the contrary, they were perfect instruments to promote the new faith.

MORGAN LE FAY AND THE FAIRY MOUND IN
SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

Richard North

The fourth and final fitt of the fabulous romance now known as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* contains the conclusion in which, as is well known, Sir Gawain offers his neck to the axe of the Green Knight, otherwise known as Sir Bertilak de Hautdesert, by the Green Chapel. Gawain's execution will be the return blow in a game which the Green Knight, a seven-foot laughing vegetation demon, started in Camelot exactly one year before, on New Year's Day, when he taunted King Arthur to cut off his head. All but Arthur could see the outcome, for the Green Knight was clearly 'fantoum and fayryze' (line 240), so Arthur's advisers restrained their hot-tempered young king and Gawain courteously swung the axe instead. The head came off, the Green Knight's body revived and picked it up, and the head, lifting up its eyelids, told Gawain where to find him in a year's time, 'To þe Grene Chapel þou chose' (line 451).¹

Now Sir Gawain is led to the Chapel. His adventures in the Pennines east of the Wirral, not the least of which was a stay in a castle with playful lord and lady, are over and he may concentrate the mind on his own beheading. His guide offers to cover for him, should he choose not to go, but Gawain fends him off, saying 'I were a knyȝt kowarde, I myȝt not be excused' (line 2131). Then the guide gives him directions, to the bottom of the valley:

Penne loke a littel on þe launde, on þi lyfte honde,
And þou schal se in þat slade þe self chapel
And the borelyche burne on bent þat hit kepez. (lines 2146–48)

Gawain rides into a gorge, with crags that graze the clouds, reins in his horse and looks for the chapel:

¹ Text from *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: 'Pearl', 'Cleanness', 'Patience' and 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'*, ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron. Reference is also made to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, 2nd ed., rev. Norman Davis (Oxford, 1967).

He seȝ non suche in no syde, and selly hym þoȝt,
 Saue, a lyttel on a launde, a lawe as hit were,
 A balȝ berȝ bi a bonke þe brymme bysyde,
 Bi a forȝ of a flode þat ferked þare;
 Þe borne blubred þerinne as hit boyled hade. (lines 2170–74)

This megalithic burial mound (*lawe*) beside a channel (*forȝ*, Old English *furh*) or cascade (*forȝ*, Old Norse *fors*) appears to be the home of the Green Knight.² In that connection we might call it a 'fairy mound'. Its designation as 'the Green Chapel' is a kenning, not a description, for 'chapel' is no Christian term for a mound, even if Gawain thought it strange ('selly') not to find a chapel in such a wilderness (line 2170). As he admits, this place is the inverse of a true chapel, for the Green Knight could sing matins there only 'on þe Deuelez wyse' (line 2191), in this 'chapel of meschaunce' (line 2195), 'þe coreddest kyrk þat euer I com inne!' (line 2196). The odd thing is that two hundred lines later Gawain genuinely wishes to be confessed there.

Even more oddly, this fairy mound resembles the castle where Gawain has just been staying. Back then on Christmas Eve, riding through an ancient oak-wood in search of the Green Chapel, Gawain prayed to Mary for a lodging where he might hear mass and matins. As if by a miracle, the castle appears:

Nade he sayned hymself, segge, bot pryē
 Er he watz war in þe wod of a won in a mote,
 Abof a launde, on a lawe, loken vnder boȝes
 Of mony borelich bole aboute bi þe diches,
 A castel þe comlokest þat euer knyȝt ahte,
 Pyched on a prayere, a park al aboute,
 With a pyked palays pyned ful þik,
 Þat vmbeteȝe mony tre mo þen two myle. (lines 763–70)

A *launde* and a *lawe* describe both the castle in Fitt II and the Green Chapel in Fitt IV. Is it possible that the Chapel is the castle in its true form, and that Gawain, without knowing it, has been there all this time? This essay will argue that he has been, while seeking to show how the illusion of castle, lord and lady matters to a reading of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

If we look for a model for this castle in the poet's likely sources, we find at least two. Firstly, it has been argued that his closest likely source

² *Sir Gawain*, ed. Tolkien and Gordon (see above, n. 1), pp. 125–26, note to line 2173.

is *Le Livre de Caradoc* ('Caradoc's book', part of the anonymous continuation of Chrétien's *Perceval*), in which a knight enters 'Cardoil' at Pentecost to challenge Arthur's court to a beheading contest, the second round of which must take place in the same place in a year's time; Caradoc cuts off the challenger's head but is spared his own beheading because the man turns out to be his father.³ A version of this tale has been used for the plot of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, but the Cardoil setting in both rounds of the challenge tells us to look elsewhere for a model for Gawain's Penine castle. Instead, it appears that the poet has based his description of this on the castles of two other French romances from the early thirteenth century, *Le Chevalier à L'Épée* ('The Knight of the Sword') and *La Mule sans Frein* ('The mule without a bridle'). In *Le Chevalier à L'Épée*, Gauvain takes refuge in a *chastel* after losing his way in a forest:

Delez un grant plesseïz voit
 Sor une mote un bel chastel,
 Qui estoit ferme de novel.
 Lou fossé voit lé et parfont,
 Et el baille devant lo pont
 Avoit mout riche herberjage;
 Onques Gauvains en son aage
 Nus plus riche n'ot mes veü,
 Se a prince o a roi ne fu.
 Mes je ne me voil demorer
 Au herberjage deviser,
 Mes que mout estoit biaux et riches.
 Il est venuz descî q'as lices,
 Ainz est parmi la porte entré
 Et a lou baille trespasé
 Et est au chief do pont venu;
 Encontre lui est acouru
 Li sires, qui fait grant sanblant
 Qu'il soit de son venir joiant. (lines 206–24)⁴

Beside a great enclosure he sees
 On a mound a fine castle
 Which has been recently fortified.
 The ditch he sees wide and deep
 And the bailey before the bridge

³ *Ibid.* (see above, n. 1), pp. xvi–xvii.

⁴ *Two Old French Gauvain Romances: Part I: 'Le Chevalier à L'Épée' and 'La Mule sans Frein'; Part II: Parallel Readings with 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'*, ed. R. C. Johnston and D. D. R. Owen (Part I), D. D. R. Owen (Part II) (Edinburgh and London, 1971), p. 35.

Had very rich outbuildings;
 Richer ones Gawain hadn't seen
 Ever in his life before,
 Whether for prince or king.
 But I do not wish to dwell
 On describing the outbuildings,
 Except that they were very fine and rich.
 He has come not only as far as the tilting grounds,
 But has entered through the gate,
 And has passed the bailey,
 And has come to the head of the bridge;
 Run out to meet him is
 The lord who makes great show
 Of being delighted by his coming.

Equally cheerfully, the lord of this castle puts his daughter into Gauvain's bed for the night, supposing that the knight, going the way of his predecessors, will be carved up by a magic sword which descends at such moments to protect her honour. The girl, however, warns Gauvain and he survives the test with just a nick from the sword. The next day her father marries her to Gauvain, although she deserts him for another man, in the second half, as they ride back to Cardoil. The first half of this romance has a plot of 'Type 313', in which an evil ogre's daughter or other dependent helps the hero survive a test in his castle; and it has been argued that such a folktale is the true influence on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.⁵ But there are verbal correspondences to suggest that the English poet has his source in *Le Chevalier à L'Épée*, as well as in the other romance, *La Mule sans Frein*.

The story in *La Mule sans Frein* begins when a maiden arrives at Cardoil at Pentecost, asking for a knight to recover the lost bridle of her mule, the same beast which will take him to the castle where the bridle is kept. Sir Keus (Kay) volunteers, but after crossing a trackless forest and verminous valley, he gives up before a wild river whose slender bridge he fears to cross. Sir Gauvain takes up the quest, and having crossed the bridge, finds a strange revolving castle where he must pass a beheading test. His challenger raises his axe and no more, thereafter praising him for his courage and asking him to overcome wild beasts. The mistress of the castle, the first girl's sister, gives the bridle to Gauvain, who returns it to its owner in triumph. This girl rewards him with kisses and a promise of service: 'il est

⁵ Claude Luttrell, 'The Folk-Tale Element in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Studies in Philology* 77 (1980), 105-27, esp. 111-17.

bien droiz / Que je mete tot a devise / Lo mien cors en vostre servise' ('it is well right that I put all my person freely into your service', lines 1082–84). Among several parallels with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, this one appears to be the model for the hostess's opening proposition '3e ar welcum to my cors / Youre awen won to wale' in lines 1237–40.⁶

Le Chevalier à L'Épée and *La Mule sans Frein* have been treated as no more than analogues for the English romance, but both French poems are preserved in the same manuscript (Berne, Bibliothèque de la Ville, MS 354); both were used as sources for *Diu Krône* ('The Crown'), written by Heinrich von dem Türlin in c. 1220; and it has been argued by specialists in French Romance that both French poems were also known to the poet of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* nearly two centuries later, who adapted them, from memory rather than by manuscript, into his one plot.⁷ At the point in the narrative where Gawain first sights the Pennine castle, the poet seems to translate the words 'voit / sor une mote un bel chastel' from *Le Chevalier à L'Épée* (lines 206–07) directly into 'watz war (...) of a won in a mote' (line 764), though with the English sense of 'water' for French *mote* 'mound'; he seems to render the past participle *fermez* in 'fermez de novel' (line 208) wrongly into 'loken' (line 765), with the sense 'enclosed' rather than 'fortified'; and from *La Mule sans Frein*, where Sir Keus comes upon the revolving castle 'fors do bois en la prairie' (line 280) 'out of the wood on the meadow', the English poet seems to have his castle 'pyched on a prayere' (line 768).⁸ In these ways, the castles of these two French romances appear to be blended in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

This castle seems real enough when we see it for the first time in Fitt II. It is described as rock-solid: 'Hit dut no wyndez blaste' (line 784). The solidity continues as Gawain's eye moves up from the moat:

þe walle wod in þe water wonderly depe
 And eft a ful huge heȝt hit haled vpon lofte,
 Of harde hewen ston vp to þe tablez,
 Enbaned vnder þe abataylment, in þe best lawe;
 And sy þen garytez ful gaye gered bitwene,
 Wyth mony luflych loupe þat louked ful clene;
 A better barbican þat burne blusched vpon neuer. (lines 787–93)

⁶ *Two Gauvain Romances*, ed. Johnston and Owen (see above, n. 4), pp. 191–92.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–9, 166–70 and 199.

⁸ *Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. Andrew and Waldron (see above, n. 1), p. 236, note to line 769. *Two Gauvain Romances*, ed. Johnston and Owen, pp. 181–82.

The masonry works against any idea that the castle is a mirage, though it springs out of nowhere and ‘schemered and schon þurȝ þe schyre okez’ (line 772). It has more presence than Camelot, whose ‘hallez and cham-brez’ are described solely from the inside (lines 37–129, at 48). Yet something is not quite right:

And innermore he behelde þat halle ful hyȝe,
 Towres telded bytwene, trochet ful þik,
 Fayre flyyolez þat fyȝed, and ferlyly long,
 With coruon coprounes, craftyly sleȝe.
 Chalk-whyȝt chymnées þer ches he innoȝe,
 Vpon bastel rouez þat blenked ful quyȝe.
 So mony pynakle payntet watz poudred ayquere
 Among þe castel carnelez, clambred so þik,
 Þat pared out of papure purely hit semed. (lines 794–802)

The higher Gawain’s eye, the more surreal the castle. This is a French château rather than a manor in the Midlands. The proliferating pinacles, turrets and alabaster roofs lead Gawain, and perhaps us too, further to the momentary conclusion that the castle might ‘purely’ (‘really’) be a table decoration. Paper castles were the ‘subtleties’ of later Medieval banquets, such as the luxury denounced by Chaucer’s Parson in *The Parson’s Tale*, or the exotic table decorations of Belshazzar’s feast in *Cleanness*, line 1408.⁹ This impression of the castle and its sudden appearance in the forest, where Gawain had seen no dwelling before, are strange enough to suggest that the castle and everyone in it are an illusion.

The idea of an illusion, however, is soon dispelled by the bustle of men inside the walls, and by the autonomy of their rumour when they hear it is Sir Gawain, on having ‘fonged þat fyne fader of nurture’ (line 919, in lines 915–27). The vitality of this court continues for the length of Gawain’s stay, especially later when we see, without being too near the hero, how the host eats a quick breakfast before hunting on the third day (line 1690) and his wife puts on a hairnet and strapless dress (lines 1733–39). So when the poet initially shows us Gawain from the men’s independent point of view, the castle is confirmed as real. Its owner, when we first see him, is equally substantial: the mature ‘lorde of þe lede’ descending to welcome Gawain from his chamber (line 833), with a beaver-hued beard, ‘stif on þe strypppe on stalworth schonkez, / Felle face as þe fyre’ (lines 846–47).

⁹ *Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. Andrew and Waldron (see above, n. 1), p. 168: ‘Pared out of paper and poynted of golde’. R. W. Ackerman, ‘“Pared out of Paper”: Gawain 802 and Purity 1408’, *Journal of English and Germanic Studies* 56 (1957), 410–17.

He gives commands to an adoring household, laughs to find that his guest is Gawain (line 909) and offers his hood in a game to the person 'Þar most myrþe myzt meue þat Crystenmas whyle' (line 985). The religious observance in this castle works against the impression of magic, and in the chapel Gawain meets the man's wife together with an older lady who also joins in the fun. On 27 or 28 December, when Gawain makes to leave the castle after celebrating Christmas there, his host 'faste can hym payne / To holde lenger þe knyzt' (lines 1042–43), finds out his errand and offers to have Gawain shown the way to the Green Chapel, which just happens to be 'not two myle henne' (line 1078). All this seems a relief until, on a second reading, we might recall that the palisade around the park extends for 'mo þen two myle' (line 770), as if the castle in the park really is the Green Chapel and Gawain will eventually be led back there in a circle.

Another game that Gawain's host proposes for 29–31 December is hospitality itself. On the face of it he offers Gawain the run of his castle, for Gawain and his host will exchange their winnings at the end of each day, Gawain's in the castle for the lord's outside it. Gawain wins a kiss from his hostess on the first day, two kisses on the second, and three, plus a green silk girdle, on the third; his host wins deer, a boar and a fox-pelt in the same order. As the lord of the castle seals their agreement with the words 'Who bryngez vus þis beverage, þis bargayn is maked' (line 1112), his warmth makes him real. His hunting makes him look no less so, when on the second day, in particular, he pursues a wild pig 'til þe sunne schafted' (line 1467). The men corner the boar and while they keep this dangerous animal at bay, their lord dismounts, draws his sword 'and bigly forth strydez, / Foundez fast þurȝ þe forth þer þe felle bydez' (lines 1584–85). He bears the brunt as the beast thrusts itself up the blade, wrestling with it to the death in the rapids, then laughs later as he swaps his shoulder of boar with Gawain's two-kiss gain for the day. In all, his complex persona charms Fitts II and III with such wit, energy and strength that he rivals Sir Gawain for the role of protagonist. The persona derives from a literary tradition, but his dig to the shy Gawain, 'ȝe ben ryche in a whyle, / Such chaffer and ȝe drowe' (lines 1646–47), is expressed with down-to-earth realism.¹⁰ Although he is later revealed to be the Green Knight, here he is at once a *vavasour* with a long line of literary antecedents, mostly in

¹⁰ Hanneke Wirtjes, 'Bertilak de Hautdesert and the Literary Vavasour', *English Studies* 65 (1984), 291–301, esp. 300–01.

Middle French romance, and a host who politically also represents the best of provincial living to an outsider from the capital.¹¹

As the first day of hunting draws on, however, there is an odd transformation in this *vavasour*. The deer are driven down the gully to their massacre at the stream, in a confusion of bowmen from hidden stations, dogs and ‘hunteez wyth hy3e horne’ (line 1165). The slaughter goes on until nightfall:

þe lorde, for blys abloy,
Ful oft con launce and ly3t,
And drof þat day wyth joy
Thus to þe derk ny3t. (lines 1174–77)

In this quatrain, where we see the lord *abloy* ‘transported’, the joy of hunting transforms him into the lord of the Wild Hunt. The motif of *der wilden Jagd* was widespread in Europe and is known in English chronicles from the twelfth century onwards.¹² The finest vernacular example is in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in the Peterborough manuscript (E), when the corrupt abbot Henry of Poitou entered Peterborough on 6 February 1127:

þa son þæræfter þa sægon 7 herdon fela men feole huntes huntun: ða huntes wæron swarte 7 micle 7 ladlice, 7 here hundes ealle swarte 7 bradegede 7 ladlice, 7 hi ridone on swarte hors 7 on swarte bucces. Þis wæs segon on þe selue derfald in þa tune on Burch 7 on ealle þa wudes ða wæron fram þa selua tune to Stanforde, 7 þa muneces herdon ða horn blawen þet hi blewen on nihtes. Soðfeste men heom kepten on nihtes; sæidon, þes þe heom þuhte, þet þær mihte wel ben abuton twenti oðer þritti hornblaweres.¹³

Soon after that many men saw and heard many huntsmen hunting: the huntsmen were black and big and loathsome, and their dogs were all black and broad-eyed and loathsome, and they rode on black horses and on black billy-goats. This was seen in the same deer-park of the town of Peterborough and in all the woods that there were from the same town to

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 291–301. H. Bergner, ‘The Two Courts: Two Modes of Existence in “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”’, *English Studies* 67 (1986), 401–16, esp. 410–12. One of these antecedents is undoubtedly Sir Bertelak in the Vulgate *Merlin*, as proposed by R. R. Griffith, ‘Bertilak’s Lady: The French Background of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*’, in *Machaut’s World: Science and Art in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Madeleine Pelter Cosman and Bruce Chandler, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 314 (New York, 1978), 249–66, on which more anon.

¹² H. M. Fladieck, ‘Harlekin. Germanischer Mythos in romanischer Wandlung’, *Anglia* 61 (1937), 225–340; *Anglia* 66 (1942), 59–69.

¹³ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition, Volume 7: E*, ed. Susan Irvine (Cambridge, 2004), p. 129. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, trans. M. J. Swanton (London, 1996), p. 259.

Stamford, and the monks heard the horns blow that they were blowing at night. Honest men kept watch at night; said that it seemed to them that there might well be about twenty or thirty men blowing horns.

In the romance of *Sir Orfeo*, in its version in Harley 3810, folio 6a, of the early fifteenth century, King Orfeo regains his lady Heurodis after seeing her one day in a rout of supernatural huntsmen. The wilderness is where one may see them:

Ofte he saw hym bysyde
(In þe hote somer-tyde)
þe kyng of fayré with his route
Com to hunte all aboute
With dvnnyng & with blowyng,
& houndys grete cryeng;
But, for-soþe, no best þey nome,
Ne he ne wyst wher þey becom.
& oþer while he myȝt ysé
A gret ost by hym te,
Wel a ij c knyȝtes,
Wele y-armed at al ryȝtes.
Sum-while he saw oþer þing:
Knyȝtes & ladies com rydyng
In bryȝt atyre, & disgysid,
With esy pace, & wele-avyssed. (lines 271–86)¹⁴

Dame Heurodis appears with ladies in waiting, and when Orfeo follows them all back into the rock, he discovers the magic land around their brightly lit castle to be ‘alle grene’ (line 339). The differences between this hunt-scene and Fitt III of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* consist of *Sir Orfeo*’s time of day (day-time) and year (summer), the military escort and most significantly, the fact that the ‘kyng of fayré’ takes no deer. The host’s hunt in the Pennine poem is robustly physical, therefore real, even though the initial din, blowing and hounds in a wilderness in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* make up the *faerie* topos that everyone knows. Here we might take note of Luttrell’s ‘Type 313’ evidence for the devil in huntsman’s green.¹⁵ This is how the true nature of Gawain’s host begins to emerge in the winter darkness in lines 1174–77.

Inside the castle the mask slips even sooner. The host and his retinue have told Gawain, before he announces his mission, not to think too highly

¹⁴ *Sir Orfeo*, ed. A. J. Bliss, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1966), p. 26.

¹⁵ Luttrell, ‘The Folk-Tale Element’ (see above, n. 5), 111–17.

of his first meal: 'Pis penaunce now 3e take / And eft hit schal amende' (lines 897–98). This is as if Gawain is in a chapel already; and when the men remark to each other that they have 'fonged' Gawain, on reflection it might seem that they have 'caught' him, in a trap (line 919). Then a day falls out of the calendar:

Pe joye of Sayn Jonez day watz gentyle to here
 And watz þe last of þe layk leudez þer þoʒten.
 Per wer gestes to go vpon þe gray morne;
 Forþy wonderly þay woke and þe wyn dronken,
 Daunsed ful dreȝly wyth dere carolez. (lines 1022–26)

The guests' parting revel takes place on 27 December; if we count backwards, the three-day hunt involves Gawain from 29 to 31 December, before his appointment on New Year's Day; thus it appears, as has been noted, that the poet skips 28 December, Childermas or Holy Innocents' Day.¹⁶ It seems unlikely that a line is missing as Gollancz conjectured, for it is clear that the extant total of lines in this poem, 2530, may be rationalized as a play on divine perfection (five by five: 'ay faythful in fyue and sere fyue syþez', line 632) mixed in with human flaw (one by one), as in: $100 + 1 = 101$; $x 5 = 505$; $+ 1 = 506$; $x 5 = 2530$. The host proposes his exchange of winnings at the end of this uncertain day (27 or 28 December?) and begins his three days of hunting on the following morning. Perhaps, if the host is a fiend as some have thought, the time-slip shows him unable to find the person of Christ, just as with King Herod in the Massacre of the Innocents. Not only the whole Christmas season but also the efficacy of the castle chapels are thrown into doubt by this strange circumvention of Holy Innocents' Day on 28 December.

The poem's real hunt takes place inside the castle over the same three mornings, when Gawain is pursued apparently for sex by his host's (unnamed) lady. The difference in setting, Gawain's curtained bed in a chamber inside as opposed to the stream outside in freezing weather, is

¹⁶ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Israel Gollancz, with introductory essays by Mabel Day and M. S. Serjeantson, Early English Texts Society, original series 210 (London, 1940), pp. 110–11, note to lines 1020–23: 'I am strongly inclined to think that 1022 is explanatory of the previous line, and that the line following it, referring to Childermas, has been omitted by the scribe'. *Sir Gawain*, ed. Tolkien and Gordon (see above, n. 1), p. 104, note to line 1022. *Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. Andrew and Waldron (see above n. 1), p. 246, note to line 1021 ff. On a solution by interpolation of the word wale, see Ad Putter, 'In Search of Lost Time: Missing Days in *Sir Cleges* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in *Time in the Medieval World*, ed. Chris Humphrey and W. M. Ormrod (York, 2001), pp. 119–36, esp. 131–35.

diminished when it becomes clear that the lady is no less a risk to Gawain than her husband to the deer in the gully. Their inexorable drive to death would be Gawain's also, if he lived up to his courtly reputation:

And ay þe lady let lyk a hym loued mych,
 Þe freke ferde with defence and feted ful fayre.
 'Þaȝ I were burde bryȝtest,' þe burde in mynde hade,
 Þe lasse luf in his lode for lur þat he soȝt
 Boute hone,
 Þe dunte þat schulde hym deue,
 And nedeȝ hit most be done.
 Þe lady þenn spek of leue,
 He granted hir ful sone. (lines 1281–89)

But on this occasion Gawain's mind is preoccupied with the Green Knight's beheading game. Here the text of line 1283 is read from the manuscript, as in Tolkien's edition.¹⁷ Some editors have given the words 'Þe lasse luf in his lode' to the lady's thoughts as well, while Davenport goes so far as to punctuate all lines 1284–87 as her thoughts.¹⁸ Any more words from her mind, however, as Tolkien points out, 'would be a serious flaw in the handling of the plot', because then the poet would have told us too soon that she knows everything.¹⁹ Other editors, closing this window into the lady's mind, have emended *I* to *ho* and the second *burde* to *burne*, in order to focus on Gawain's courtesy to the lady as if she were the fairest he could recall. The manuscript, however, offers us both options, this courtesy of Gawain's and a window into the woman's thoughts. It makes sense to give these in some way, directly in line 1283 and indirectly in line 1284.

The poet's source for this motif, a temptress reflecting on her prey, may be Chrétien's *Lancelot* romance from the late twelfth century. Chrétien gives us a girl who has tried to seduce Lancelot, and who tells herself, on Lancelot's refusal to sleep with her, how unsurpassed he is:

'Car si con ge pans et devin,
 Il vialt a si grant chose antendre
 Qu'ainz chevaliers n'osa enprendre

¹⁷ *Sir Gawain*, ed. Tolkien and Gordon (see above, n. 1), p. 36.

¹⁸ A. B. Friedman, 'Morgan le Fay in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Speculum* 35 (1960), 260–74, esp. 266. *Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. A. C. Cawley and J. J. Anderson (London, 1976), p. 206: '“Even though I were the fairest of women,” she thought, “the less love would he bring with him on his journey”—because of the self-destruction he sought without respite'. W. A. Davenport, *The Art of the Gawain-Poet* (London, 1978), p. 166.

¹⁹ *Sir Gawain*, ed. Tolkien and Gordon (see above, n. 1), p. 110, note to line 1283.

Si perilleuse ne si grief;
Et Diex doint qu'il an veigne a chief'. (lines 1274–78)²⁰

'For as I think and surmise,
He will be intending a great mission
Such as knights never dare to undertake,
So dangerous and so difficult it is;
And God grant that he may finish this'.

The poet of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* lets us catch a similar glimpse of the lady of the castle as a creature who is, by her own words, not the beauty the poet said she was, with such skin, shape and complexion (lines 943–44) as made her 'wener þen Wenore, as þe wyȝe þoȝt' (line 945). The poet has already called Guinevere a jewel alongside the other women of Camelot, 'þe comlokest to discrye', 'A semloker þat euer he syȝe / Soth moȝt no mon say' (lines 81, 83–84). So it seems that the host's lady, just before she gives up her pursuit of Gawain for the day, lets us know that her human shape is an illusion.

There are at least two more motifs of this kind in the French *Queste del Saint Graal*, the fourth branch of the thirteenth-century Arthurian Prose Cycle, which may be read as Sir Thomas Malory adapts them in his fifteenth-century *Sankgreal*.²¹ The first is the damsel who arrives on board a ship and promises to direct Sir Percival to the Red Knight in return for his love. She has a pavilion laid out and serves Percival food and drink until his lust is heated by alcohol, his will enslaved to hers, 'and hym thought she was the fayryst creature that ever he saw'. Having promised to serve her only, he prepares to join her on a bed but is deflected by the sign of the cross on his sword. He crosses himself 'and therewith the pavylyon turned up-so-downe and than hit chonged unto a smooke and a blak clowde'. He cries to Jesus in fear and sees the woman board her ship once more. Accusing him of betrayal, 'she wente with the wynde, rorynge and yellynge, that hit semed all the water brente after her'. The other near miss is with Sir Bors on the same quest, who lays what he thinks is his brother Lionel's body in the chapel of a castle, then finds himself forgetting both this and his search for Launcelot through the hospitality of the lords and ladies, 'and anone cam oute of a chambir to hym the fayryst lady

²⁰ *Two Gauvain Romances*, ed. Johnston and Owen (see above, n. 4), p. 193. For the same motif in other instances, Claude Luttrell, *The Creation of the First Arthurian Romance: A Quest* (London and Evanston, 1974), pp. 11–12, 131–32, 268.

²¹ *Malory: Works*, ed. Eugene Vinaver, 2nd ed. (London, 1971), pp. 549–50 (14.9) and 570–71 (16.11–12).

that ever he saw, and more rycher beseyne than ever was quene Guenyver or ony other astate'. While they dine together, she asks for his love, the more keenly the more his sense of chastity holds him back. When he turns her absolutely down, she makes ready to drop off the tower with all her ladies, who beg Bors to save them by giving in to her. Still Bors refuses, and as they all fall to the earth, he blesses himself, 'and anone he harde a grete noyse and a grete cry, as though all the fyndys of helle had bene aboute him. And therewith he sawe nother towre, lady, ne jantillwomen, nother no chapell where he brought hys brothir to'.

Although the *Sankgreal's* allegorical landscape differs from the verisimilitude of castle and wilds as these are pictured in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain's choices are the same, like the hostile role of the hostess. The thin line between the dalliance within and the violence without is shown at the end of the first day of the exchange of winnings, when Gawain takes his place in the public hall with the two ladies, while in the woods outside, the lord of this land 'bi þat þe sunne heldet' (line 1321) slays an unparalleled number of deer. Gawain jests with the ladies, safe for the day, whilst his woodland counterparts are tested for fat, slit open, flayed, disembowelled, unjointed at the shoulder, divided along the backbone and beheaded (lines 1325–55). This relentless detail removes all physical difference between the deer and Gawain. The poet lets us suspect that they might meet the same fate, for an execution is sure to befall Gawain, either now or when he meets the Green Knight on New Year's Day, if he succumbs to the lady. As she wears him down, so the risk increases. On the third morning, when she appears before him as a relief from his fear of dying, so beautiful that 'wiȝt wallande joye warmed his hert' (line 1762), the poet says that 'gret perile bitwene hem stod' (line 1768); that is, unless Mary remembers her knight, who is now so close to adultery 'þat hym bihoued / Oþer lach þer hir luf oþer lodly refuse' (lines 1771–72). Refuse is just what Sir Bors does in the *Sankgreal*, without having Gawain's fear of being called a 'craþayn' (line 1773).

In comparison, Gawain's faith is more worldly, his fear of sin compromised by a fear of discourtesy. In this context, however, Twomey's remark that 'Gawain's religion is only skin-deep' gives a misleading impression.²² Christian conduct is the strongest element in Gawain's intricate pentangle

²² M. W. Twomey, 'The Gawain-Poet', in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. David Johnson and Elaine Treharne (Oxford, 2005), pp. 273–87, esp. 278.

of virtues. Some of these are to do with women and chivalry, but on the other side of the pentangle, and closer to his heart on the inside of his shield, Gawain has Mary's image 'depaynted' (line 649). So it appears that the poet is concerned with Christianity as a working religion, faith as it is lived rather than idealized.²³ And Gawain's faith is too complex to live by, for as the fox is ambushed by dogs (lines 1903–05), so Gawain is caught out by looking the wrong way. The lady's offer of sex is a feint. She outwits him instead with the offer of a green girdle to save his life. When Gawain's neck is later nicked for withholding this trophy, it becomes clear to him only then, in Fitt IV, that his host was the Green Knight and that he fell into a trap. Reminded then that to fear death is human, Gawain is invited by the same host back to his castle to make up with his lady and Morgan le Fay, the enchantress who arranged the beheading and is also Gawain's aunt.

In fact, Morgan le Fay is behind the whole deception. Without knowing it, Gawain meets her alongside the hostess soon after arriving in the castle, in the main chapel just after evensong. The host's young attractive wife looks on him then for the first time and when he thinks she is fairer than Guinevere, she makes for him as if for prey: 'Ho ches þurȝ þe chaunsel to cheryche þat hende' (line 946). There is a similar encounter between Gauvain and his host's daughter in *Le Chevalier à L'Épée*, in which Sir Gauvain meets his girl when his host, the Knight of the Sword, pushes her into his arms in a dining hall (lines 252–73).²⁴ In the English poem, however, it emerges that the host's wife is steered to Gawain by a woman ('Anoper lady hir lad', line 947), who walks just to the left of her as an 'auncian' (line 948) of ugly and aged appearance, covered up but for brows, eyes, nose and lips. By giving this role to the older lady, the poet introduces her right here as the architect of Gawain's temptation.²⁵ This confirms the Green Knight's later attribution of the whole plot to Morgan le Fay, Gawain's own aunt who hates her half-brother Arthur and his queen. Griffiths has made the reasons for this plot entirely more plausible, although his idea that the hostess is to be understood as Guinevere's half-sister stretches what is in the text.²⁶ It is Morgan who is dominant,

²³ See Davenport, *The Art of the Gawain-Poet* (see above, n. 18), pp. 174–80.

²⁴ *Two Gauvain Romances*, ed. Owen (see above, n. 4), p. 186.

²⁵ Pace Friedman, 'Morgan le Fay' (see above, n. 18), 274: 'if the shrivelled hag at the castle had acted in some sinister fashion, Bercilak's explanation might then have carried a measure of plausibility'.

²⁶ Griffith, 'Bertilak's Lady' (see above, n. 11), 260–61.

and the first time we meet her we are placed in a chapel: the Green Chapel? As Angela Carson says, though not for her reasons (that *chapel* also means 'place of slaughter'), 'the elements of this scene constitute an ironic foreshadowing' of Gawain's later meeting with the Green Knight.²⁷ By substituting a chapel for the dining hall in this part of the poem, the poet not only looks forward to the 'Grene Chapel', but tells us that Gawain is already inside it.

As we have seen, the castle may be understood as the Green Chapel itself in illusory form. On Gawain's arrival in the castle, it becomes clear that a bell is regularly rung for mass in several chapels which are served by more than one priest (line 930). Gawain visits the main chapel once after each bedroom conversation with the hostess, the third time to be confessed. On this occasion, having hidden the green girdle with the aim of concealing it from his host later the same day, Gawain moves quickly:

Syþen cheuely to þe chapel choses he þe waye,
 Preuély aproched to a prest and prayed hym þere
 Þat he wolde lyste his lyf and lern hym better
 How his sawle schulde be saued when he schuld seye heþen. (lines 1876–79)

Gawain's smart pace would suggest that he wishes to hide the girdle with the least consequence, by having himself confessed before he has the chance to lie to his host. On the other hand, breaking the rules of a parlour game is not a mortal sin as adultery is. Gawain's march to the chapel may show his confidence that the green talisman will protect him. Though his request to the priest is for help on a grander scale, the last confession before death, it seems that he thinks his death is no longer imminent. Breaking the rules of his host's game is less important to him than owning up, presumably, to three days of hidden lust for his hostess:

Pere he schrof hym schyrly and schewed his mysdedez,
 Of þe more and þe mynne, and merci besechez,
 And of absolucioun he on þe segge calles;
 And he asoyled hym surely and sette hym so clene
 As domezday schulde haf ben digt on þe morn. (lines 1880–84)

This apparently perfect confession has been studied in various ways, by John Burrow, who treats it as routine and incomplete until Gawain's scene with the Green Knight in Fitt IV; and by Gerald Morgan, who quotes

²⁷ Angela Carson, 'The Green Chapel: its Meaning and its Function', *Studies in Philology* 60 (1963), 598–605, esp. 603.

Thomas Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics* (his *Summa Theologiae*) to excuse Gawain from any sin at all through the fact that here he actively seeks out confession.²⁸ The latter argument, though oblivious to the warmth of this poet's humour, is correct about the validity of the contrition part of Gawain's confession. On the other hand, it is far from certain that the generalized but mysterious priest in the chapel at this moment has the power to confess. There is the likelihood that he does not; that, like the castle, he is an illusion for something worse. In the frantic entertainment that follows, there is also an implication that Gawain's confession was rushed, too good to be true:

And syþen he mace hym as mery among þe fre ladyes,
 With comlych caroles and alle kynnes joye,
 As neuer he did bot þat daye, to þe derk nyȝt,
 With blys.
 Vche mon had daynté þare
 Of hym, and sayde, 'Iwysse,
 Þus myry he watz neuer are,
 Syn he com hider, er þis'. (lines 1885–92)

With 'to þe derk nyȝt', words which are repeated from the lord's Fairy-King transformation in line 1177, we seem to be again in the land of illusion. Once again, the older lady appears by Gawain's side.

In his description of the sinister Green Chapel the next day, the poet appears to allude to the castle in *La Mule sans Frein*, which, as we have seen with his word 'prayer' (line 768) for 'praiere' (*La Mule*, line 280), also contributes to his image of the castle in the Pennine forest. Whereas Gawain sees the mound with 'a hole on þe ende and on ayþer syde' (line 2180), overgrown and all 'holȝ inwith, nobot an olde caue' (line 2182), in the French poem *Gauvain*, taking on Keus' quest for the castle of the bridle, looks through an 'arche' ('archway') to discover a 'cave' (lines 497–98). Whereas Gawain stands on the roof of the Green Chapel, calls to the Green Knight, hears the mysterious 'quettyng' (line 2220) and sees him 'Whyrlande out of a wro wyth a felle wepen' (line 2222) from out of a different 'hole' nearby, *Gauvain* stands before a castle which revolves: 'Li chastiaus si fort tornoioit / Con meule de molin qui muet' ('The castle was

²⁸ J. A. Burrow, *A Reading of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'* (London, 1965), p. 105. Gerald Morgan, 'The Validity of Gawain's Confession in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *The Review of English Studies*, n.s. 36 (1985), 1–18.

turning as fast as the millstone that grinds in a mill', lines 440–41).²⁹ In these ways, the poet of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* seems to model both his castle and the Green Chapel on the castle in *La Mule sans Frein*. Letting the Green Knight whirl out of a nook across the flood from the mound, a new axe at the ready, the poet shifts the revolutions from the place to its supernatural keeper.

As if saving time, the Green Knight vaults across the flood on the shaft. With much psychological realism in the poet's blend of fear and humour, he raises the axe over Gawain and gives two feigned blows. The third one, more successful, nicks the skin of Gawain's neck. In the *dénouement*, the Green Knight reveals that he was Gawain's host; the hostess, his own wife; and the attempted seduction, a test of Gawain's virtue:

'I sende her to asay þe, and sothly me þynkkez
On þe fautlest freke þat euer on fote zede.
As perle bi þe quite pese is of prys more,
So is Gawayn, in god fayth, bi oþer gay kny3tez.
Bot here yow lakked a lyttel, sir, and lewté yow wonted;
Bot þat watz for no wylyde werke, ne wowyng nauþer,
Bot for 3e lufed your lyf; þe lasse I yow blame'. (lines 2362–69)

This is no religious absolution, even if we read the meanings of *Pearl* into this passage in the belief that one poet composed both poems, perhaps as a chaplain in a noble household. *Pearl* is first in the sequence of poems in BL MS Cotton Nero A.x, along with *Patience* and *Cleanness* which come before *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.³⁰ Since most believe that one author composed all four poems, it seems likely that the Green Knight here is at least appropriating the highest Christian symbol of perfection. Yet he describes Gawain's one mistake, his lack of loyalty, personally in these lines, not as a Christian sin. The confessional frame is provided not by him but by Gawain, whose first words after spiritual rebirth, as it were, paint an allegorical tableau worthy of *The Vision of Piers Plowman*:

'Corsed worth cowarddyse and couetyse boþe!
In yow is vilany and vyse, þat vertue disstryez'. (lines 2374–75)

With his own angry drama of religious allegories, Gawain redefines himself as coward and traitour against his nature as a knight, and finishes with confession and a request for absolution:

²⁹ *Two Gauvain Romances*, ed. Johnston and Owen (see above, n. 4), pp. 72–73, 106 and 198.

³⁰ *Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. Andrew and Waldron (see above, n. 1), pp. 15–17.

'I biknowe yow, knyzt, here styll,
 Al fawty is my fare.
 Letez me ouertake your wyll
 And efte I schal be ware'. (lines 2385–88)

Gawain's offer to prove better 'efte' ('the next time'), if the Green Knight wishes it, is a request for penance. However, his resolve to follow the Green Knight's 'wyll' lasts but a short time when he sees the creature not taking his confession seriously. The Green Knight's answer to Gawain's self-flagellation makes him into an ironic Father Confessor:

Thenn loze þat oþer leude and luflyly sayde,
 'I halde hit hardily hole, þe harme þat I hade.
 Pou art confessed so clene, beknowen of þy mysses,
 And hatz þe penaunce apert of þe poynt of myn egge,
 I halde þe polysed of þat plyzt and pured as clene
 As þou hadez neuer fofetted syþen þou watz fyrst borne'. (lines 2389–94)

An axe is not the normal way to prescribe penance, and the seriousness of the Green Knight's other doctrinal terms may also be questioned. As far as he is concerned, Gawain's penance, his nick on the neck, is already performed. The Green Knight has justly been read as a supernatural deceiver, with Gawain in the spiritual clear.³¹ At the same time, it is clear that the poet's sympathies lie with his supernatural figure, whose response to Gawain's challenge on surviving the third blow ('in hert hit hym lykez', line 2335) endears him to anyone on Gawain's side. Thereafter the 'wyll' of this laughing apparition is that Gawain keeps the green girdle as 'a pure token / of the chaunce of þe Grene Chapel at chevalrous knyztez' (lines 2399–2400), evidently as a trophy to prove his superiority to the other knights mentioned. Yet Gawain has no wish to see himself that way. He keeps the girdle, but rejects both this meaning for it and the invitation to return and make up with the hostess. What follows in Gawain, a clerical denunciation of women as deceivers of men (lines 2414–26), is equally unattractive. It proves to be self-serving ('Me þink me burde be excused', line 2428).

³¹ Luttrell, 'The Folk-Tale Element' (see above, n. 5), 126: 'Slipping into priestly robes—the devil could do this literally—the Green Knight has tried to extinguish in Gawain what in fact lends absolution lasting efficacy. He fails'. Morgan, 'The Validity of Gawain's Confession' (see above, n. 28), 14: 'The Green Knight occupies the role of confessor, and Gawain that of penitent sinner'. The last clause may be true.

In the long run, however, so it has been argued, Gawain's shame, his negative self-reflection, may be positive in its new literary sense of individuality.³² In this light, it is even possible that the poem was conceived to tell us about 'how Gawain got that way' in his other (to be seen as 'later') manifestations in Arthurian romance, particularly in his dealings with Sir Lancelot; and not about how Everyman should respond to intimations of human weakness.³³ It seems that the poet is writing a religious romance rather than a romance-coloured piece of doctrine. Whatever absolution Gawain receives in this 'corsedest kyrk' (line 2196) cannot have much canonical value.

When Gawain gets his girdle-wearing penance worded for him in the name of the Green Knight, the poem's *dénouement* is complete. Gawain asks him for his name, and the Green Knight, in giving it, promises to be truthful:

'Bertilak de Hautdesert I hat in þis londe,
 Þurȝ miȝt of Morgue³⁴ la Faye, þat in my hous lenges,
 And koyntyse of clergie, bi craftes wel lerned.
 Þe maystrés of Merlyn mony ho [hatz] taken,
 For ho hatz dalt drwry ful dere sumtyme
 With þat conable klerk; þat knowes alle your knyȝtez
 At hame.
 Morgue þe goddes
 Perfore hit is hir name;
 Weldez non so hyȝe hawtesse
 Þat ho ne con make ful tame.

Ho wayned me vpon þis wyse to your wynne halle'. (lines 2445–56)

Before we go any further, the extent of Morgan's power over Sir Bertilak needs some textual note. The word *hatz* has long been supplied for *taken's* missing modal verb in line 2448, but the surrounding syntax is still problematic.³⁵ Much depends here as elsewhere in the poem on where we place commas, dashes or stops. The easiest syntax gives the least popular meaning. The idea of reading line 2446 (*Þurȝ miȝt...*) as the continuation

³² On which, see Alcuin Blamires, 'Gawain's Shame Again' (Saturday 18 June), 10th Annual LOMERS Conference, on 'MS Cotton Nero A.x', 18–19 June 2010, and forthcoming.

³³ On Gawain's 'light-of-love' record with women in other Arthurian romances, see Friedman, 'Morgan le Fay' (see above, n. 18), 265.

³⁴ For *Morgue* as the French-derived form here, see Twomey, 'The Gawain-Poet' (see above, n. 22), p. 279.

³⁵ *Sir Gawayne*, ed. Sir Frederic Madden (London, 1839), at line 2448.

of Bertilak's sentence beginning with his name, was rejected by Gollancz because 'it can hardly be that the knight is called Bertilak through the might of Morgan la Faye'.³⁶ Nonetheless, Gollancz had to make up a line of his own in order to put these lines in separate sentences.

Editors after Gollancz have admitted the same syntactic problem, though offering a different solution. Instead of adding his or another new line, they join the *mizt of Morgue la Faye* to a sentence ten lines later at the beginning of the next *laisse*, the Green Knight's words *Ho wayned me ypon his wyse*. Thus there is a full stop after *londe* in line 2445 in both Tolkien's edition and that of Andrew and Waldron. To cope with the ten-line jump this produces, the same editors turn most of the intervening material into a parenthesis. Tolkien breaks his new sentence with a dash after *taken* at the end of line 2448 and Andrew and Waldron theirs with a dash after *lerved* at end of line 2447; and both editions provide another dash at the start of the new *laisse* in line 2456. According to this punctuation, the Green Knight digresses on Morgan's past affair with Merlin, her magic and renown (lines 2447(8)–55), before explaining her actions in his main sentence, that she sent the Green Knight in order to test Camelot's renown, risk Arthur's life and frighten Guinevere (lines 2456–62). The problem with this syntax is that both Morgan's pronouns, *ho* in line 2448 and *ho* in line 2456, make us look awkwardly back for her name which is given indirectly in the *mizt of Morgue la Faye* near where the sentence begins. This punctuation gives a strained syntax. Gollancz wanted to separate Morgan's *mizt* from the name and lordship of *Bertilak de Hautdesert*. But Emerson's idea that Bertilak's title came from Morgan's clergy is not so outlandish. If the Green Knight's name and title are in the same sentence as Morgan's power, as I have punctuated lines 2445–46 above, it is clear that they come from Morgan le Fay.³⁷

Not all scholars have seen Bertilak's natural shape as that of a green half-giant. The name *Bertilak* represents the Green Knight's persona for the society around him east of the Wirral, 'his everyday name' as Waldron and Andrew say.³⁸ As we have seen, this Bertilak who entertains Gawain in a castle near the Staffordshire-Cheshire border is the earthy represen-

³⁶ O. F. Emerson, 'Two Notes on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 21 (1922), 363–410, esp. 409. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Israel Gollancz, with introductory essays by Mabel Day and M. S. Serjeantson, Early English Texts Society, original series 210 (London, 1940 [for 1938]), 130.

³⁷ This syntax is endorsed in Twomey, 'The *Gawain*-Poet' (see above, n. 22), pp. 279–80.

³⁸ *Sir Gawain*, ed. Andrew and Waldron (see above, n. 1), p. 296, note to line 2445.

tation of a literary type.³⁹ Griffiths has demonstrated, through the poet's likely beaver-hue Englishing of the 'le Rous' agnomen of Sir Bertilak in the Vulgate *Merlin*, that the latter poem is also a source.⁴⁰ In keeping with the solidity of this *vavasour*, it has seemed natural to some scholars, in retrospect, to treat Bertilak's ruddiness as real and his greenness as due to Morgan's enchantment, supplemented by carnival costume and make-up.⁴¹ One argument is that the poet adapted a disenchantment narrative in which a spell on Sir Bertilak, one which made him green, was broken at the end of the poem.⁴² This lost source would have resembled the later version of *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle* (in the Percy Manuscript of 1650), where Gawain beheads his monstrous host at the end of the story in order to restore him to human shape. The only snag is that Sir Bertilak has appeared in human form in his castle. In Albert Friedman's view, the poet dropped the disenchantment motif in order to preserve this form during Gawain's stay at the castle, and introduced Morgan in order to supply a motive for Bertilak's journey to Camelot. The challenger's green shape in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* keeps him distinct from the *vavasour* until Fitt IV, when both are revealed to be the same man, a shape-shifter.

Davenport defines Sir Bertilak as 'a combination of two natures, which overlap at some places in the poem but which are never fused into one explicable being'.⁴³ If Bertilak is read as a shape-shifter, the question of which shape is more natural to him, the green or the ruddy, is of no consequence. Certainly, *La Mule sans Frein* and *Le Chevalier à L'Épée*, the poet's likely sources, show that Bertilak's two shapes derive from two different people. Since Kittredge, most readers would agree that our poet has woven together two Gawain narratives, a beheading contest (Fitts I, II and IV) with a temptation (Fitt III).⁴⁴ In *Le Chevalier à L'Épée*, Gauvain survives a test of his chastity with a nick from the magic sword. The next day, the host offers him the daughter's hand in marriage. The English poet

³⁹ Wirtjes, 'The Literary Vavasour' (see above, n. 10), 291–301. Bergner, 'The Two Courts' (see above, n. 11), 410–12.

⁴⁰ Griffith, 'Bertilak's Lady' (see above, n. 11), 256–60.

⁴¹ Laurence Besserman, 'The Idea of the Green Knight', *English Literary History* 53 (1986), 219–39, esp. 224–26, and 227: 'when he takes his leave of Gawain he is still in full costume'. L. M. Clopper, 'The God of the "Gawain-Poet"', *Modern Philology* 94 (1996), 1–18, esp. 16.

⁴² Friedman, 'Morgan le Fay' (see above, n. 18), 270–71.

⁴³ Davenport, *The Art of the Gawain-Poet* (see above, n. 18), p. 175.

⁴⁴ G. L. Kittredge, *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, Mass., 1916), p. 106.

joins the temptation and beheading narratives through the exchange of winnings by which he lets Gawain's bedroom behaviour determine the outcome of the beheading on New Year's Day. As aspects of the same person, ruddy Sir Bertilak and the Green Knight reflect this combination of plots, in that they are derived respectively from the Knight of the Sword and the challenger with the axe.

In terms of age, however, the headsman challenger appears to be primary. His persona goes back further to *Le Livre de Caradoc* (c. 1200), ancestor of the main plot, and beyond that, to tales of Celtic folklore such as the Irish *Fled Bricrend* ('Bricriu's Feast').⁴⁵ If the Green Knight gets his name and title from Morgan, as he says in lines 2446–61, it follows that he gets his human shape and 'hous' from her as well. So, when he says that Morgan 'wayned me vpon þis wyse to your wynne halle (line 2456) and later that 'Ho wayned me þis wonder your wyttez to reue' (line 2459, with *me* as an ethic dative), he refers to himself as a naturally green wonder, and to his swift transport in and out of Camelot (*waynen*, 'to transport') as the element supplied by Morgan. As a *genius loci*, the Green Knight would need some help shifting to Camelot. As the formula, with which he walks away 'whiderwarde-soeuer he wolde' (line 2487), might tell us, the Green Knight, his lady and their household are probably all green to start with.

When the Green Knight tells Gawain that the power behind his human shape is Morgan le Fay, he adds that Morgan was the architect of the beheading game and that her motive was to make Guinevere die with fear. This is a reference to Morgan's French Vulgate identity, in particular to her revenge on Guinevere for banishing her from Camelot over an affair with Guiamor, Guinevere's cousin.⁴⁶ Nor is Morgan's love-life irrelevant to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The dame later revealed to be Merlin's old lover is described as a lively table companion, fun to be with: 'A mensk lady on molde mon may hir calle' (line 964). Morgan is so prominent in Hautdesert for the length of Gawain's stay that he acknowledges her part in his deception even before Bertilak has named her.⁴⁷ Living as an exile on the margins of Arthur's world, Morgan has none but the locals for company. In this frame, Sir Bertilak and his lady are not the west Midland provincials they are so disarmingly made out to be, but creatures of the night whom Morgan has made into her servants. Perhaps they also love her

⁴⁵ *Sir Gawain*, ed. Tolkien and Gordon (see above, n. 1), pp. xv–xvii.

⁴⁶ Friedman, 'Morgan le Fay' (see above, n. 18), 268. Griffith, 'Bertilak's Lady' (see above, n. 11), 256–60. Twomey, 'The Gawain-Poet' (see above, n. 22), p. 284.

⁴⁷ Noted in Carson, 'The Green Chapel' (see above, n. 27), 605.

because she gives them the illusion of what it is to be physically human. Whatever we think of that, it is not surprising that the Green Knight thinks of Morgan as a goddess (line 2452).⁴⁸ What is more surprising is his reference to the 'koynntyse of clergie' that helps Morgan give him his human form (line 2447). If there is any wonder who the priests are who serve the chapels of Hautdesert, they may be seen as this dubious clergy. The status of these priests throws the value of Gawain's absolution inside the castle into as much doubt as my argument that the castle chapels are the Green Chapel in illusory form.

The presence of at least two *Beaundesert* place-names in the fourteenth-century West Midlands, one for a manor and the other for a bishop's palace, seems to confirm *Hautdesert* as the poet's name for the castle.⁴⁹ However, the primary meanings of *Hautdesert*, such as 'high wasteland' or 'high hermitage', hint at the Green Chapel as well.⁵⁰ The Old Irish *dísert* and Welsh *diserth*, cognates of *-desert*, mean 'hermitage, refuge'.⁵¹ The idea of a hermit's cell in this name is enough to confirm the implication of the poet's *launde* and *lawe* doublet for both, that the castle and the Green Chapel were one and the same and will be again, should Gawain wish to accompany Bertilak back to the hostess, Morgan his aunt and the 'meny' that loves him (line 2468). It has been remarked that the castle's deceptions look set to continue, especially as the fairy formula of the Green Knight's departure is placed 'as if his castle did not exist at all'.⁵²

By the same token, neither does Bertilak. This name for the Green Knight's occasional shape seems to derive from French *Bertolac* (nominative *Bertolais*), a character in the Vulgate *Merlin* whose name in the English translation is *Bertelak*.⁵³ Since Gollancz preferred to read *Bertilak* over *Bercilak* in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, it has been noted

⁴⁸ Her goddess renown is inherited from the Vulgate *Lancelot*: Griffith, 'Bertilak's Lady', 257.

⁴⁹ P. J. Lucas, 'Hautdesert in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Neophilologus* 70 (1986), 319–20 (the manor near Henley-in-Arden; the episcopal residence near Longdon, by Cannock Chase, Staffs.). For the castle as based on Swythamley Park (Staffs.), see Robert Cockcroft, 'Castle Hautdesert: Portrait or Patchwork?', *Neophilologus* 62 (1978), 459–77.

⁵⁰ *Sir Gawain*, ed. Tolkien and Gordon (see above, n. 1), p. 129: 'The name evidently applies to the castle, from which, rather than from the obscure mound, the lord would take his name'. *Sir Gawain*, ed. Andrew and Waldron (see above, n. 1), p. 296, note to line 2445: 'must be the name of the castle'.

⁵¹ Andrew Breeze, who identifies Hautdesert with the castle, not the chapel, in 'The *Gawain*-Poet and Hautdesert', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 38 (2007), 135–41, at 137.

⁵² Luttrell, 'The Folk-Tale Element' (see above, n. 5), 126.

⁵³ *Sir Gawain*, ed. Tolkien and Gordon, pp. 128–29, n. to line 2445. Griffith, 'Bertilak's Lady' (see above, n. 11), 252–56.

that the Green Knight's name and title in combination in line 2445 make a macaronic injunction, *ber ti lak de haut desert* 'bear thy lack of high deserving'.⁵⁴ This allegory is confirmed not only by the courtiers' judgement of Gawain's motivation earlier in the poem, 'Hadet wyth an aluisch mon, for angardez pryde' (line 681), but also verbally nine lines after Bertilak's naming, when the Green Knight says that 'weldez non so hyze hawtesse' (line 2454) Morgan will tame this man. When Gawain comes home to Camelot, the girdle stands for his fault, but also represents his past pride in having believed himself faultless; as well as a continuing pride, perhaps, in showing now that he is not. The injunction, in short, seems right for him, but its delivery through the name *Bertilak de Hautdesert* is so occasional as to undermine the figure who bears the name. Have the human Bertilak, his title, castle and regional *avasour* persona all been created solely to send a message to the knights of Camelot? The answer is apparently yes, and by Morgan le Fay.⁵⁵

Morgan's illusion of a castle is part of this message. If we identify the castle with the Green Chapel, as their introductory formulae prompt, we see that Morgan's role in this fairy mound is not the late unsatisfying motive it has been taken to be, but the overarching control of a well-populated illusion in one place. Hereby the deception of Sir Gawain may be seen as greater than previously thought. This poem is often read as a romance metaphor for religious ideas, in which Gawain's absolutions, in whichever chapel he thinks he is in, provide a moral example without being doctrinally sound. As a poem, it deals with Christianity as practised in the world, how a man may be led into temptation by deceptively normal people in places which are not what they seem. Gawain comes out of these illusions vindicated, for he avoids mortal sin in one temptation, even while he breaks an agreement in another. And yet he ends up feeling humbled as well. When he groans at knowing himself to be so flawed in Camelot later, it seems that the poet goes further, saying that the greatest illusions are those that we make for ourselves.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Davenport, *Art of the Gawain-Poet* (see above, n. 18), p. 175. Also in Avril Henry, 'Temptation and Hunt in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Medium Ævum* 45 (1976), 187–99; without reference to Davenport, Breeze, 'Gawain-Poet and Hautdesert' (see above, n. 51), 139. For text, see *Sir Gawain*, ed. Gollancz, p. 130: 'on the evidence of the MS. generally, the reading is in favour of "ti" rather than "ci"'.
⁵⁵ See also John Eadie, 'Morgain la Fée and the Conclusion of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Neophilologus* 52 (1968), 299–304, at 303.

⁵⁶ I would like to thank Dr Karin Olsen of the University of Groningen, and Dr Kenna Olsen of Mount Royal University, Calgary, for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

CRESSEID 'BEYOND THE PALE'¹

David J. Parkinson

The moon when full displays a figure long and widely recognized as that of a man—implicitly an old peasant—with a stolen bundle of thorns on his back.² The familiar image calls for reflection: a figure of churlish, rebellious, aged masculinity is described upon a feminine celestial body.³ The conjunction of Man and Moon has various literary occurrences, a notable early example of which can be found in Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*. Dating from the late fifteenth century, this Scottish poem provides an alternate conclusion to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, one that subjects the female protagonist to leprosy and an untimely death. Diverging from *Troilus* soon after the outset of *The Testament*, Henryson memorably remarks, 'Quha wait gif all that Chaucer wrait was trew?'⁴ ('Who knows if all that Chaucer wrote was true?')⁵ As does his dismissal of Chaucer, Henryson's depiction of the Man in the Moon opens truth and authority to question. Henryson employs this persistent feature of moon-lore at the historical moment when such superstitions were being subjected to increasingly sharp official denunciation.⁶ Treating the Man in the Moon dismissively would not have suited the design of *The Testament of*

¹ The phrase occurs in Seamus Heaney's *The Testament of Cresseid: A Retelling of Robert Henryson's Poem* (London, 2004), p. 27 (this is the translation of Robert Henryson's *The Testament of Cresseid* that is cited throughout this essay; unless otherwise indicated, all other translations are original); for a discussion of the significance of this phrase in Heaney's translations of medieval poems, see Conor McCarthy, *Seamus Heaney and Medieval Poetry* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 98, 110; see also note 51, below. Without critical infusions of advice by Heather Giles, Anne Kelly, and the editors of this volume, this essay could not have been completed.

² Oliver Farrar Emerson, 'Legends of Cain, Especially in Old and Middle English', *PMLA* 21 (1906), 831–929, at 841; Stith Thompson, *Motif-index of Folk Literature* (Electronic resource; Charlottesville, Va., 2000), A751, 751.1, 751.1.1; B. J. Whiting and H. W. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), M138.

³ Thompson, *Motif-index*, A736.1.

⁴ *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. Denton Fox (Oxford, 1981), line 64; all quotations from Henryson's poems are taken from this edition, with some modification of spelling and punctuation.

⁵ Heaney, *The Testament of Cresseid*, p. 15.

⁶ Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches Sabbath*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (London, 1991), p. 91. Heaney, *The Testament of Cresseid* (see above, n. 1), p. 15.

Cresseid: the Man's fate bears comparison to Cresseid's own; he foreshadows the degradation Cresseid will experience, from nobility to indigence. The beliefs of common people come into special prominence in *The Testament*. A kinship may even be detected between the Man in the Moon and Cresseid herself, who in her dying moments embraces a popular tradition in bequeathing her soul to Diana.⁷ Like the Man, Cresseid enters a condition that is transitory and fixed, degraded and yet raised into view. A significant contributor to the power of *The Testament of Cresseid* is the distinctively uncourtly, unclerkly awareness expressed intermittently therein of expulsion and its attendant suffering.

That awareness persists under prevailing strictures: in *The Testament*, rebellion seems impossible to depict without its being framed and defined by authority. Having experienced a downward spiral of relationships—Troilus, Diomede, 'And sum men sayis, into the court, commoun' (line 77; 'And be, as men will say, available'),⁸—Cresseid curses Venus and Cupid, and the gods descend to judge her. Paired with Saturn to assign Cresseid's penalty is Cynthia, the moon, with the figure of the thorn-bearing Man displayed on her gown:

Hir gyte was gray and full of spottis blak,
And on hir breist ane churle paintit full evin
Beirand ane bunche of thornis on his bak,
Quhilk for his thift nicht clim na nar the hevin. (lines 260–63)

Her gown was gray with patterned spots of black
And on her breast a painting of a peasant
Bearing a bunch of thorn sticks on his back,
The theft of which still foiled his climb to heaven.⁹

Thus depicted on Cynthia's *breist*, the Man in the Moon appears as a sign of wrongful ascent decisively thwarted. Each lunar cycle, the thief is displayed laden with his beggarly booty: an effectual emblem of his crime, the *bunche* holds him from ascending further (Matt. 7.16).¹⁰ To gather and

⁷ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore, Md., 1983), pp. 40–43; Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*, pp. 91–100.

⁸ Heaney, *The Testament of Cresseid*, p. 15; McCarthy, *Seamus Heaney and Medieval Poetry* (see above, n. 1), pp. 150, 157.

⁹ Heaney, *The Testament of Cresseid*, p. 24.

¹⁰ Cf. William Elford Rogers, *Image and Abstraction: Six Middle English Religious Lyrics*, *Anglistica* 18, ed. Norman E. Eliason, Knud Sørensen, and T. J. B. Spencer (Copenhagen, 1972), p. 55.

carry so prickly a burden is to have the contemptible values of a *churle*. Unburdened by such values, 'His lighte goost' might have ascended, like that of noble Troilus, 'Up to the holughnesse ('hollowness') of the eighthe sphere'.¹¹ Oppressed by his wretched bundle, he remains no higher than the moon, open to the sight and comment of everyone on earth. His exposure makes him vulnerable, even ridiculous: in 'Lord Fergus Gaist', a Scots poem preserved in the Bannatyne Manuscript, he even suffers the indignity of having 'Ane pair of auld yrn schone' ('a pair of old iron shoes') pilfered from him by the impish little ghost of Lord Fergus.¹² The churl's punishment fits his crime: he must always carry the load of thorns he stole. The weight of the load and the gravity of the crime of theft keep him from rising, just as his urge to ascend keeps him from falling.

The fixative balance of motives and consequences that Henryson depicts—ambition frustrated by attendant greed—merits comparison with earlier depictions of a more straightforwardly laden Man in the Moon, as in Alexander Neckam's treatment of the theme:

Nonne novisti quid vulgus vocet rusticum in luna portantem spinas? Unde quidam vulgariter loquens ait: 'Rusticus in luna, quem sarcina deprimit una,/ Monstrat per spinas nulli prodesse rapinas.'¹³

Do you know what they call the rustic in the moon, who carries the faggot of sticks? So that one vulgarly speaking says,
See the rustic in the moon,
How his bundle weighs him down;
Thus his sticks the truth reveal,
It never profits man to steal.¹⁴

Elsewhere, the downward pull of this burden from so exalted but shameful a position induces a fear of falling, as is memorably evoked in the Harley lyric 'The Man in the Moon':

Mon in þe mone stond ant strit,
on is bot-forke his burþen he bereþ;
Hit is much wonder þat he na down slyt,
For doute leste he valle he shoddreþ and shereþ

¹¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Barry Windeatt (London, 2003), 5.1808–09; for a review of the sources for this passage, see Windeatt's note, pp. 465–68.

¹² 'Lord Fergus Gaist', Bannatyne Manuscript no. clxxvi, f. 114v, lines 76–77.

¹³ *Alexandri Neckam de naturis rerum*, ed. Thomas Wright, Rolls Series, vol. 34 (London, 1863), p. 54 (line 14).

¹⁴ Sabine Baring-Gould, *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages* (London, 1877), p. 196.

When þe forst freseþ muche chele he byd;
 þe þornes beþ kene, his hattren totereþ.
 Nis no wiht in þe world þat wot wen he syt,
 Ne, bote hit bue þe hegge, whet wedes he wereþ.¹⁵

The Man in the Moon can stand or stride,
 And on a forked stick a bundle he bears.
 Much wonder it is that he doesn't slip-slide;
 For fear of a fall he shudders and veers.
 By the freezing of the frost he is heavily tried.
 His clothing gets ripped when his thorn-faggot tears,
 And only that burden of thorn can decide
 When he bends down and sits, or what clothing he wears.¹⁶

According to the translator of this poem, the Man in the Moon is thus 'linked in the popular mind with that hapless contemporary, the poor gatherer of fuel on rich men's land'.¹⁷ In the common view, the Man in the Moon is stuck in mid-stride where he has always been: his inability to move bespeaks the conditions of his station, with its anxious, incessant toil. The Man's fear and frustration has been argued to anticipate social change and the dawn of a new day.¹⁸ From another view, the depiction of his plight calls instead for derision.¹⁹ The diversity of modern response points to some complexity in the medieval handling of the theme: the figure of fun mitigates, or contains, the dire warning. Pandarus may thus say more than he knows when he mocks Troilus for his foreboding that Criseyde will reject him: 'Thow hast a ful gret care / Lest that the cherl may falle out of the moone'.²⁰ What might tickle a courtier's fancy about the Man in the Moon is the sheer lunacy of imagining his clownish predicament perched thus high, so that even to circulate such a tale may be to play the peasant. For Reginald Pecock, the Man epitomizes the rise of 'untrewe opinioun' through credulity 'that a man which stale sumtyme

¹⁵ 'The Man in the Moon', *The Harley Lyrics: The Middle English Lyrics of MS. Harley 2253*, ed. G. L. Brook, 4th ed. (Manchester, 1968), p. 69 (lines 1–8).

¹⁶ Brian Stone, trans., *Medieval English Verse* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 107–08.

¹⁷ Stone, *Medieval English Verse*, p. 97.

¹⁸ Frank Bessai, 'A Reading of "The Man in the Moon"', *Annuaire Medievale* 12 (1971), 120–22; for a reading of this poem as antifraternat satire, see Edmund Reiss, 'Chaucer's Friar and the Man in the Moon', *JEGP* 62 (1963), 481–85.

¹⁹ Matti Rissanen, 'Colloquial and Comic Elements in *The Man in the Moon*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 81 (1980), 42–46; Carter Revard, 'The Lecher, the Legal Eagle, and the Papelard Priest: Middle English Confessional Satires in MS. Harley 2253 and Elsewhere', in *His Firm Estate: Essays in Honor of Franklin James Eikenberry*. Monograph Series, University of Tulsa, Department of English 2 (Tulsa, Okla., 1967), pp. 54–71, at p. 58.

²⁰ Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* (see above, n. 11), 1.1023–24.

a birthan ('who once stole a load') of thornis was sett in to the moone, there forto abide for evere'.²¹ From Pecock's learned perspective, the Man stands for the superstition that holds the ignorant from enlightenment and salvation. Evidently the way one sees the Man in the Moon has long depended on one's social position.

As with the Man in the Moon, so with Cresseid: Henryson turns from the courtly and the learned towards the common. When she curses her patrons Venus and Cupid, Cresseid is identified as an obtrusive offence to the order of the planetary gods (lines 127–40). Stripped of her fine belongings, she continues to be burdened by the memory of them (lines 407–69). She is specifically associated with the lunar goddess: the gods punish her with leprosy, thus marking her face with black spots like Cynthia's (lines 262, 339). Before she dies, she must learn to live like a beggar, with a beggar's hope for consolation after death.

That Henryson's Cynthia is selected along with Saturn to be Cresseid's judge sharpens the need for such acknowledgement: 'blak Saturne, and the spotty moone, figure and bitokene the condicioun of helle'.²² Drawing perhaps on Chaucer's assignment to Saturn of 'the murmur and the cherles rebelling', Henryson emphasizes the beggarly, churlish aspect of Saturn; depicted as 'ane busteous churle on his maneir' (line 153; 'in his churlish, rough, thick-witted manner'),²³ Henryson's Saturn has more than a little in common with the 'churle' painted on Cynthia's breast.²⁴ Saturn shares Cynthia's associations with transience and mortality, but he embodies rather more aggressively than does she the balance between 'earthbound, spade-bearing beggar and celestial, sceptre-wielding sovereign': he is both the one brought low and the one who brings low.²⁵ Saturn is not Henryson's only churlish oppressor of a fine lady: in *Orpheus and*

²¹ *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, ed. Churchill Babington, 2 vols., Rolls Series 19 (1860), 1:155.

²² *The Booke of Quinte Essence*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, Early English Text Society, original series 16 (1866), p. 18 (lines 34–35).

²³ Heaney, *The Testament of Cresseid* (see above, n. 1), p. 19.

²⁴ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Jill Mann (London, 2005), 1.2459; J. D. North, *Chaucer's Universe* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 410–11; Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (New York, 1953), 53, 61, 173; cf. Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (London, 1961), p. 193 on the 'dual nature' of Saturn as 'Ruler of the Golden Age' and 'cold, leaden, destructive planetary god'.

²⁵ Klibansky et al., *Saturn and Melancholy*, illustration plates 23–26, 30, 38–39, and 57; Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (London, 2003), pp. 170–71.

Eurydice, the ‘bustuos herd’ (‘rough shepherd’) Aresteus pursues Eurydice, who dies fleeing from him—and in the *Moralitas* to that poem, Aresteus is identified almost defiantly as ‘noucht bot gude vertewe’ (‘nothing other than good vertue’).²⁶ As if they were commissaries in a fifteenth-century Scottish episcopal court, Saturn and Cynthia impose penalties upon Cresseid for her slanderous denunciation of her patron deities, Venus and Cupid.²⁷ The yoking of the occupants of the outermost and innermost orbits of the planetary system makes sense from a variety of perspectives. The cunningly eloquent Mercury recommends the combination for its spanning the gamut of planetary authority: the plaintiff Cupid should entrust his case to ‘the hiest planeit heir / And tak to him the lawest of degre’ (‘the highest planet here / ... with her who’s lowest in degree’, lines 297–98). Complementarity deepens in significance, however, with Saturn’s manner being initially and dominantly that of a ‘busteous churle’ (‘rough churl’) and Cynthia being clad in a gown marked with the same ‘busteous’ emblem.

The natures of the gods exist in close orbit, each mapped closely upon the other, with resemblances recurrent through the descending system. These resemblances extend below spheres of the planetary deities: soon, in the miserable leper-house, Cresseid concludes her richly rhetorical lament sententiously: ‘Fortun is fikkill quhen scho beginnis and steiris’ (‘Fate is fickle when she plies the shears’, line 469; cf. line 454, ‘frivoll fortoun’ [‘fickle fortune’]). The manifold correspondences between the gods become apparent, now that they are visited upon Cresseid, her own wealth ‘weiris’ away, a faint reminiscence of the apparition of Saturn, whose ‘widderit weid fra him the wind out woir’ (line 167).²⁸ Later Scots poets recall these powerful correspondences when they depict Fortune ‘Crabit as Saturne’ (‘Irritable as Saturn’) and ‘mair mobile mekle nor the Mone’ (‘much more changeable than the Moon’).²⁹

²⁶ *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. Fox (see above, n. 4), pp. 135, 147, 415 (lines 97, 436, and 436n).

²⁷ David M. Walker, *A Legal History of Scotland*, 7 vols., 2: *The Later Middle Ages* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 407.

²⁸ Heaney handles this detail evocatively: ‘His cloak and suit were of a gloomy grey, / Like faded flags they flapped on him and tossed’. See *The Testament of Cresseid* (see above, n. 1), p. 20.

²⁹ William Stewart, ‘Off the Instabilitie and Fickilnes of Fortoun’, *The Buik of the Cronicles of Scotland; or, A Metrical Version of the History of Hector Boece*, ed. W. B. Turnbull, 3 vols., Rolls Series 6 (1858), 1:313 (line 10 [12956]); Alexander Montgomerie, ‘An Invectione Against Fortun’, *Poems*, ed. David J. Parkinson, 2 vols., Scottish Text Society, 4th series 28–29 (2000), 1:16 (lines 10–12).

The yoking of these cold, disfigured deities foreshadows the leprosy to which they consign Cresseid.³⁰ This affliction is not simply a negation, even though Cresseid herself, in bemoaning the sudden loss of her entitlements of nobility and youth, sees it thus (lines 407–69). The obverse of that loss is the enforced resemblance Saturn and the Moon place upon Cresseid. She assumes the characteristics of her punishers: having been 'variant' like Venus ('variable', line 230) or Fortune or the Moon, and 'crabittie' resentful like Saturn—or, as she soon says, all the 'craibit goddis'—('peevish gods', lines 154, 353), she becomes pale and lividly spotted, and so an outcast wracked with anxiety and discomfort, more than a little like the Man in the Moon. The way they crush her is to force her to be like the more obviously abject of their number—to embody the sort of person she has begun to be in making her outcry against her patron deities. She is the victim who is punished by being made a cruel parody of her oppressors.³¹ It is striking that such pejorative representations of sovereignty persist in *The Testament of Cresseid*, and that Cresseid's punishment complements her former privilege: plummeted from the flower of youth into the midwinter of decrepitude, she becomes for a while a grotesque parody of transience.³²

Remarkably, Cresseid is truer to her punisher than she has been to her former patrons: in her dying moments Cresseid wishes to be associated with Diana (lines 587–88). Like the Man's, her affiliation with the moon combines suffering and longing: the planetary goddess whose physical form displays her punishment is another face of the woodland deity to whom she bequeaths her spirit, 'To walk with hir in waist woddis and wellis' (line 588; 'to stray by paths and springs / With Diana in her wild-wood wanderings').³³ Indeed, the recognition on the face of the moon of a churl bearing a bundle of thorns may similarly recall traditional associations between the *woodwose* or wild man bearing his leafy cudgel and Diana: the victim joins the cavalcade.³⁴ Cresseid's dying desire recalls a

³⁰ *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. Fox (see above, n. 4), pp. lxxxvii, 363.

³¹ E. Duncan Aswell, 'The Role of Fortune in *The Testament of Cresseid*', *Philological Quarterly* 46 (1967), 471–87, at 475, 479–80.

³² Lesley Johnson, 'Whatever Happened to Criseyde? Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*', in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context*, ed. Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 313–21, at p. 314.

³³ Heaney, *The Testament of Cresseid* (see above, n. 1), p. 40.

³⁴ Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), pp. 79, 94, 128; cf. the discussion of this theme in Gavin Douglas's *Palice of Honour*, in Joanna Martin, 'Responses to the Frame Narrative of

persistent, widespread association between Diana and those who have died too soon, an association articulated in the *Canon episcopi* as preserved in Gratian's *Decretum*.³⁵ If the author of *The Testament of Cresseid* is, as generally accepted, the Glasgow graduate in canon law named Robert Henryson, then he would have known his Gratian.³⁶

To see the Man in the Moon more clearly requires one to shift one's gaze from the spots and concentrate instead upon the negative exposure—the cold, moistly luminous body on which these spots appear. For Bartholomaeus Anglicus, the moon may be the lowest of the planets, but she has unique characteristics that demand attention:

Amonge planetis the mone fulendith hire cours in most schort tyme . . . [and] passith in most uncerteyn and unstedfast mevinge . . . The mone in rewlinge hath most power over disposicioun of mannes body, for . . . under the mone is conteyned sikenesse, losse, fere and drede, harm and damage.³⁷

Of all the planets, the moon completes her orbit in the shortest time and proceeds with the most uncertain and variable motion. In her influence the moon has the greatest power over the state of the human body, for under her control is comprised sickness, loss, fear and dread, and harm and damage.

The changes of the moon are commonly taken to correspond to lesser and greater uncertainties on earth: 'we that duelle under the mone / Stonde in this world upon a weer' ('we who dwell under the moon stand in doubt in this world').³⁸ Within her sphere, the moon 'bears testimony to the activity of erring mortals who failed to reach heaven' and thus reflects upon the workings of Fortune.³⁹ From the perspective of old age, everything is always waning 'as the mone'.⁴⁰

John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Scottish Literature', *Review of English Studies* 60 (2009), 561–77, at 571.

³⁵ Rossell Hope Robbins, *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York, 1959), pp. 74–77. In a note in his Latin translation of the *Testament*, Sir Francis Kinaston refers to this tradition: *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. G. Gregory Smith, 3 vols., Scottish Text Society, first series 55, 58, 64 (1906–14), 1:clix.

³⁶ *Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. Fox (see above, n. 4), pp. xiii, xv; Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Chaucerian Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 255.

³⁷ *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus*, *De proprietatibus rerum*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1975–88), 1:491–93 (VIII.xvii).

³⁸ John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. Russell A. Peck, 3 vols. (Kalamazoo, 2000–06), 1: lines 142–43 (Prologue). See also Henryson's treatment of the greedy delusion cast by the alluring reflection of the moon, in the *Moralitas* to 'The Fox, Wolf, and Husbandman', *Fables*, lines 2448–51.

³⁹ Aswell, 'The Role of Fortune' (see above, n. 31), p. 477.

⁴⁰ Henryson, 'The Ressoning betwix Aige and Yowth', line 46.

In fifteenth-century Scotland, knowledge persisted of the moon as having had a mythological connection with a threefold goddess, 'callit Dyana in woddis, Luna in the aire, and Lucina in the se' ('called Diana when in the woods, Luna when in the sky, and Lucina when in the sea').⁴¹ A deeper understanding of the *triformis dea* locates the moon's third significant element in the underworld. The spots that come into view when the moon grows full thus serve as reminders of that infernal aspect: they signal that she has no business intruding into higher things: 'To spotty ho is, of body to grym' ('She is too bespotted and too horrible a body'); it is a topic that persists in diminished form in *The Lord of the Rings*, where the 'moon disfigured by the ghastly face of death' is a cognizance of evil.⁴² In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Peter Quince calls for one of his actors to 'come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine';⁴³ and when the 'Hard-handed men . . . which never labour'd in their minds till now' present their show, the courtly audience bestow particular scorn upon the entry of the Man in the Moon.⁴⁴ Such clowning and mockery avert the moon's darker associations. For the spotted moon to be marked with the figure of a churl offers the graver, more pedantic sort the chance to denounce the human susceptibility to decline and fall; it reminds urbane courtiers to be ready to wave aside such intrusions.

Still, a contradiction is emerging in the incorporation of a rebellious mortal into the cyclical sway of planetary transience. Mobility is not the Man of the Moon's prerogative, nor will it be Cresseid's; instead they must carry on as if transfixed within a mobile sphere. Having been a rebel, Cresseid must be punished as was the Man in the Moon, by being put on permanently circulating display. In circulation, the poem itself embodies this process: though the poet has memorably called in question the authority of his fictional source, whether 'authoreist or fenyeyit' ('genuine,

⁴¹ *The Sex Werkdayis and Aigis*, in *The Asloan Manuscript*, ed. Sir William A. Craigie, 2 vols., Scottish Text Society, 2nd series 14, 16 (1923–25), 1:324, line 21; cf. *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson et al. (Boston, 1987), p. 2313; Edward N. O'Neil, 'Cynthia and the Moon', *Classical Philology* 53 (1958), 1–8.

⁴² *Pearl*, ed. E. V. Gordon (Oxford, 1953), p. 39 (line 1070); J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, 3 vols. (New York, 2002), 1:914 (6.1).

⁴³ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Peter Holland (Oxford, 1994), 3.1.56–57; for this richly Chaucerian play, Shakespeare may have taken his reading *busshe* in this line of *The Testament of Cresseid* as it appears in Thynne's *Chaucer* and its reprints; for a review of the Chaucerian elements in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, see Holland's edition, pp. 87–88.

⁴⁴ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.72–73, 230–51.

or maybe something new / Invented by a poet'), he ends by admonishing 'worthie wemen' ('worthy women') to learn from Cresseid's bad example (lines 66, 610).⁴⁵ By the last line, Cresseid is indeed *deid* ('dead') and to be spoken of 'no moir' ('no more'); and yet her catastrophe is made cyclically current by each reading or copying of the poem (line 616).⁴⁶ The system in which the figures of both the Man in the Moon and the protagonist are exhibited would appear to have no exit. In both is perpetuated what Elaine Scarry would term 'the power to disembody': their judges have turned them into emblems of their own power.⁴⁷

Yet Cresseid and the Man in the Moon both seek to move beyond the sphere in which they are caught and punished. As is noted in the first line of the Harley lyric about him, the Man is forever in mid-stride. Cresseid seeks quite a different destination when she bequeaths her spirit to Diana; perhaps this is a 'poignant' allusion to the request Chaucer's Emelye makes to the goddess Diana to be allowed 'to walken in the wodes wilde / And noght to been a wif and be with childe' ('to walk in the wild woods and not to be a wife and bear children')—but then Emelye was envisioning a long, privileged life.⁴⁸ From another influential perspective, it appears that 'Cresseid, at least, thinks that she has emerged from her purgatory, and that she will be accepted as one of Diana's maidens'—but 'purgatory' is a misleading metaphor for Cresseid's latter existence.⁴⁹ Given that 'Dyana in woddis' complements 'Luna in the aire', emergence may in any case be illusory.⁵⁰ So it seemed to James VI when he castigated the ignorant for their belief in 'Diana, and her wandring court',

To speake of the many vaine trattles founded upon that illusion: How there was a King and Queene of Phairie, of such a jolly court & train as they had, how they had a teynd, & dutie, as it were, eate and drank, and did all other actiones like naturall men and women: I thinke it liker Virgils *Campi Elysij*, or anie thing that ought to be beleueed by Christians.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Heaney, *The Testament of Cresseid* (see above, n. 1), pp. 15, 41. *Longer Scottish Poems Volume One: 1375–1650*, ed. Priscilla Bawcutt and Felicity Riddy (Edinburgh, 1987), p. 367; Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Chaucerian Tragedy*, Chaucer Studies 24 (Cambridge, 1997), p. 216.

⁴⁶ Aswell, 'The Role of Fortune' (see above, n. 31), p. 485.

⁴⁷ *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford, 1985), p. 325.

⁴⁸ Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Mann (see above, n. 24), l.2299–30; *Longer Scottish Poems*, ed. Bawcutt and Riddy, p. 375.

⁴⁹ *Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. Fox (see above, n. 4), p. xci.

⁵⁰ See note 30, above.

⁵¹ James VI, *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597), pp. 73–74.

Very much in the tradition of the *Canon episcopi*, King James holds such belief to be a vestige of paganism, the affliction of superstitious 'simple creatures'. Thus the simple folk are thought to preserve the vision of an afterlife like the one the Fairy Queen shows Thomas: not quite reducible to the orthodox distribution of rewards and punishments.⁵² Cresseid's request appears just such an ignorant delusion, since all under the moon must cycle into decay; but it is a delusion that contains a protest at having to die thus.⁵³ Having Cresseid express her desire to follow this queen, Henryson could have made explicit the condemnatory treatment in the *Canon episcopi*, with which he was familiar from his academic and professional study of Gratian. He chose instead to emphasize the need of the indigent for a consolatory prospect, a plight akin to that of the peasant who tries to scrape a little extra value from the land and who tries to rise above his station, and a plight that for both Cresseid and the Man in the Moon results in an ambiguous prominence. Henryson's evident awareness of rural traditions is such that he accords them a degree of respect, one that underpins his work generally.

The supernaturalism underlying Cresseid's request may yet have as much to do with prevalent rural custom than with antique mythology. Cresseid seeks a hinterland for her soul, 'well outside the courtly garden and cultivated field with which she is familiar'.⁵⁴ This is the zone of what James called 'Phairie', 'liminal figures, both geographically and culturally, hovering around the edges of established communities and established beliefs', whose 'dwelling places lie beyond the pale of the civilized world (though for all that they are not uncivilized in themselves)'.⁵⁵ After a life foreshortened by degradation and suffering, Cresseid's vision of an afterlife without punishment is futile, a trap in the guise of an escape-hatch: in her *Testament* she remains caught, as if frozen in mid-step, in sublunary company. But even so, this aspiration reflects enduring beliefs: 'less than a hundred years ago an Irish or a Scottish countryman would have

⁵² *Thomas and the Fairy Queen*, in *Fairy Tales, Legends and Romances Illustrating Shakespeare and other Early English Writers*, ed. W. C. Hazlitt, Joseph Ritson and James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps (London, 1875), pp. 101–22, at p. 110.

⁵³ K. M. Briggs, 'The Fairies and the Realm of the Dead', *Folklore* 81 (1970), 81–96, at 96.

⁵⁴ Jana Mathews, 'Land, Lepers, and the Law in *The Testament of Cresseid*', in *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England*, ed. Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington (Ithaca, NY, 2002), pp. 40–66, at p. 64.

⁵⁵ Richard Firth Green, 'Changing Chaucer', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 25 (2003), 27–52, at 33, 35.

recognized . . . the echo of his own convictions' in the vision of an alternate destination for those whose lives have come to an untimely end; 'here we may discern a reflection of the assurance which, for later generations, lightened the peculiar pathos of untimely and unexpected death: that so to die was not to perish, but to join the fairy host'.⁵⁶ More apposite to Cresseid's vision than Emelye's prayer may be the vision of renewal the Wife of Bath purveys in her tale: a dance of ladies 'under a forest side' vanishes, leaving only a solitary, humble old woman—'A fouler wight ther may no man devise' ('no one could imagine an uglier being')—and the tale ends with this same 'olde wif' marvellously become 'as fair to sene / As any lady, emperice or queene' ('as fair to see as any lady, empress, or queen').⁵⁷ In such a forest of marvellous reversions and transformations, a Cresseid might turn the tragic trajectory of her final days into a comic cycle of waxing and waning. A landscape of such 'woddis and wellis' could turn out to be *Campi Elysii*, as James observed. If so, the joke would be on James: in deriding rustic superstition, he betrays his wish to extend his rule and refashion even the meanest of his subjects, fixed in his reflected image; but common beliefs in escapes from harsh judgement thrive under such derision and refashioning. Prospective, consolatory fantasy must find an alternate source of reflection. Lunar affiliations may thus offer a way to elude the permanent imposition of punitive authority. Without beauty, health, and all the perquisites of nobility, Cresseid has learned to think a little like a churl.

Decades ago, the conclusion of *The Testament of Cresseid* was wont to undergo a stoical reading: 'Since our life consists solely of impermanence, of dependence upon external conditions and internal states of mind that exist only to change, and since man has so little control over them, each man must strive to retain control over himself'.⁵⁸ For all its eloquence, it is a reading that misses the social dimension of an existence caught within the sphere of the moon. It has become less easy to be convinced that a noble self-possession is what anyone may learn from Cresseid. As in Henryson's fable 'The Lion and the Mouse', the mesh of temporality in the forest of this world is too cunningly woven to escape, unless those humble beings assist whose mere existence had previously seemed an irritant and whose destruction, though easy to bring about, serves no

⁵⁶ Dorena Allen Wright, 'Orpheus and Orfeo: The Dead and the "Taken"', *Medium Aevum* 33 (1964), 102–11, at 104–05.

⁵⁷ Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Mann (see above, n. 24), III.990–92, 999, 1086, 1246.

⁵⁸ Aswell, 'The Role of Fortune' (see above, n. 31), 486–87.

particular purpose. Newly arrived in the leper house, Cresseid laments the loss of all those things that made her a lady: where is the garden, she asks rhetorically,

'Quhair thou was wont full merilye in May
To walk and tak the dew be it was day,
And heir the merle and mawis mony ane,
With ladyis fair in carrolling to gane
And se the royall rinkis in thair ray,
In garmentis gay garnischit on everie grane?' (lines 428–33)

'And where most blithely in the month of May
You'd walk and wade the dew at break of day
And hear the thrush and blackbird at their song
And go with ladies carolling along,
And see the knights beribboned cap-à-pie,
Arrayed in ranks to crowd the royal throng?'⁵⁹

The lament goes on and on until a leper woman gets up, goes to Cresseid, and asks, 'Quhy spurnis thow aganis the wall / To sla thy self and mend nathing at all?' (lines 475–76, 'Why...do you kick against the wall / To destroy yourself and do no good at all?').⁶⁰ From this perspective, it is the fine lady who is pathetically caught in revealing, superfluous mid-gesture and the most debased of women who perceives some slender resolution in practising the round of tasks by which a community, even one of lepers, survives. 'Go leir', go learn, the leper woman instructs Cresseid.

⁵⁹ Heaney, *The Testament of Cresseid* (see above, n. 1), p. 34.

⁶⁰ Heaney, *The Testament of Cresseid*, p. 35.

DIE WIDERSACHER DES ALLMÄCHTIGEN GOTTES:
TEUFEL UND DÄMONEN IN DEN *CONCORDANTIAE CARITATIS*
DES ULRICH VON LILIENFELD

Rudolf Suntrup

1. *Einführung*

Seit dem letzten Viertel des 12. Jahrhunderts werden in großartigen Bildprogrammen liturgischer Kunst sowie in Text-Bild-Zyklen Konzepte vom Heilswirken Gottes in der Geschichte verwirklicht, denen gemein ist, dass sie sich auf das Denkmodell der Typologie gründen.¹ Dieses beruht auf der im Mittelalter ausgestalteten Auffassung vom universalen Heilswirken Gottes in der Geschichte, nach der sich die vorchristliche Zeit in Christus und der ihm mystisch verbundenen Kirche gesteigert erfüllt. Alttestamentliche Personen, Ereignisse und Einrichtungen oder signifikante Beispiele aus der Naturgeschichte stehen zum Neuen Testament und dem in ihm bezeugten Heilsgeschehen in einem Verhältnis von Vorbild und erfülltem Gegenbild, von Typus und Antitypus. Der Typus bekommt dabei in Kenntnis des Antitypus eine neue, im Rückblick als vorausweisend erkannte Qualität.

Die Ausformung der Typologie zu großen typologischen Text-Bild-Zyklen erreicht in der seit etwa 1220 bezeugten *Bible moralisée*, dann im 14./15. Jahrhundert mit den ältesten erhaltenen Handschriften der – wohl um die Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts entstandenen – *Biblia Pauperum* und der reichen Überlieferung des *Speculum humanae salvationis* beeindruckende Höhepunkte. Den markanten Schluss dieser groß angelegten Zyklen bilden seit der Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts die *Concordantiae Caritatis* (CC) des Zisterzienserabtes (und später wieder einfachen Mönchs) Ulrich von Lilienfeld, in denen sich ein hervorragendes Zeugnis spätmittelalterlicher klösterlicher Kultur und Frömmigkeit präsentiert. Das unter der Aufsicht

¹ Im Folgenden nehme ich einige Formulierungen aus meiner Einführung in die Edition auf (s. die folgende Anm.); diese informiert über den Forschungsstand und den Autor, die Überlieferung, die Einordnung der CC in die typologischen Text-Bild-Zyklen des Mittelalters, über Werktitel, Zweck, Aufbau und Inhalt des Textes, seine Illustrationen, die Quellen und die Rezeption.

des Autors Ulrich entstandene ‚Urexemplar‘ ist der Codex 151 der Stiftsbibliothek Lilienfeld (Niederösterreich).²

Inhaltlich ist die Schrift in ihrem Kern eine wohl für die Laienbrüder und Mönche des Stiftes gedachte, reich illustrierte Textsammlung zur Predigtvorbereitung und Meditation, die nach dem Zyklus des Kirchenjahres und der Heiligenfeste gegliedert ist. In diesen Kerntexten bildet die aufgeschlagene Verso- und Recto-Doppelseite für den Leser und Betrachter jeweils eine Sinneinheit. Die Bildseiten (Verso-Seiten) zeigen in einem zentral platzierten, schon durch seine Größe im Rang hervorgehobenen Medaillon als Hauptdarstellung die Geschichte des Evangeliums vom Tage: im ersten Teil *De tempore* Szenen aus dem Leben Jesu oder Parabeln und Gleichnisse, im zweiten Teil *De sanctis* zumeist Märtyrerszenen der Heiligenlegende. Diese neutestamentlichen oder legendarischen Szenen werden von jeweils vier Prophetenhalbfiguren begleitet. Bibelzitate in der Umschrift der Medaillons und in Spruchbändern erläutern die Szene. Unter den Hauptbildern sind in textierten Bildfeldern zunächst zwei Präfigurationen aus dem Alten Testament, seltener auch aus der Apostelgeschichte, der Apokalypse oder aus Apokryphen angeordnet. Prägend für die CC ist, dass zusätzlich der große Bereich der Naturallegorese, vor allem die Auslegung von Tieren, in das typologische Denkmodell einbezogen wird und dieses somit erweitert: Direkt unterhalb der genannten Präfigurationen werden daher in gleicher Größe, offenbar also auch in gleichem Rang, Typen aus der Naturgeschichte präsentiert (vgl. unten Abb. 2 und 4). Auf diese Weise werden 238 Antitypen mit ihren Typen zu insgesamt 1188 verschiedenen Szenen vereinigt. Auf den Recto-Seiten wird der Text-Bild-Inhalt der Verso-Seiten in einem ausführlichen lateinischen Text im Hinblick auf die Konkordanzen aller Einzelheiten mit dem Tagesevangelium kommentiert und allegorisch-typologisch, zugleich

² Der Forschung waren die CC zwar seit langem bekannt. Insgesamt war aber der bis vor wenigen Jahren erreichte Forschungsstand insofern unbefriedigend, als die CC sowohl von der Philologie als auch von der Kunstgeschichte noch nicht in ihrer Gesamtheit gewürdigt werden konnten, da deren Texte und Bilder nur in Teilen aus der Forschungsliteratur bekannt waren und die lange geplante Edition des maßgeblichen Lilienfelder Codex 151 durch Herbert Douteil nicht zustandegekommen war. Nach eingehender redaktioneller Bearbeitung konnte sie nun herausgegeben werden. Ergänzt wird sie durch zwei von Rudolf Suntrup neu verfasste Kapitel zur Edition sowie zur Einführung in das Werk: Herbert Douteil, *Die ‚Concordantie Caritatis‘ des Ulrich von Lilienfeld. Edition des Codex Campiliensis 151 (um 1355)*. Herausgegeben von Rudolf Suntrup, Arnold Angenendt und Volker Honemann. Bd 1: *Einführungen, Text und Übersetzung*. Bd 2: *Verzeichnisse, Quellenapparat, Register, Farbtafeln der Bildseiten der Handschrift* (Münster, 2010). – Alle Abbildungen sind unserer Edition entnommen.

auch, der Grundintention des Zyklus entsprechend, tropologisch gedeutet. Diesen Kerntexten schließen sich weitere Kleintexte allegorisch-didaktischen Inhalts an, von denen einige (mit deutschem Text) Ulrich zuzuschreiben sind.

Trotz substanzieller struktureller, konzeptioneller Unterschiede zu den eingangs genannten Zyklen basieren die CC wie diese auf der bereits im frühen Christentum begründeten, dann im Mittelalter breit ausgestalteten Grundüberzeugung, dass Gott sich in der Bibel, dem Schöpfungswerk und dem Kontinuum der gesamten Menschheitsgeschichte offenbart. Ulrich thematisiert dies zumindest indirekt in der Titelgebung seines Werkes, auf die er im Prolog (2r)³ eingeht: Die in Text und Bild umgesetzte typologische Beziehung zwischen christlich-kirchlichem Antitypus und dessen Vorbildungen im alttestamentlichen Geschehen und in Phänomenen der Natur ist in besonderer Weise geeignet, die *Concordantiae Caritatis*, die ‚Übereinstimmungen des liebenden Wirkens‘ Christi zu offenbaren. Der Heilsplan Gottes kann dabei trotz aller Anfechtungen und Gefährdungen durch das Böse nicht außer Kraft gesetzt werden.

Es mag, zumindest auf den ersten Blick, erstaunlich erscheinen, in welchem Ausmaß die CC, die doch als ‚Leitmotiv‘ das Heilswirken Gottes in der Person Christi und in den Heiligen der Kirche zum Thema haben, die ‚Gegenwelt‘ Gottes, die Gefährdung der göttlichen Heilsordnung und des menschlichen Heils durch die ‚Widersacher‘, den Teufel und die Dämonen, zum Thema machen.⁴ Kaum eine Seite, auf der nicht von Versuchung, Gefährdung durch die Sünde, von den Verlockungen des Bösen die

³ Alle Verweise, lateinischen Zitate und deren Übersetzungen (von Herbert Douteil) beziehen sich auf unsere Edition des Lilienfelder Codex 151 (wie Anm. 2). Ausgabenrelevante Eigenheiten wie die Zeilenzählung der Druckvorlage wurden getilgt; Zitate werden nach neuer Rechtschreibung wiedergegeben.

⁴ Dazu grundlegend Walter Kirchschräger, Leo Scheffczyk, Christoph Daxelmüller, Dieter Harmening, ‚Dämon‘, I. Begriffsgeschichtlich; II. Religionsgeschichtlich; III. Altes Testament – Judentum – Neues Testament; IV. Historisch-theologisch; V. Systematisch-theologisch; VI. Kulturhistorisch; VII. Kunsthistorisch; VIII. Religionspädagogisch, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3., völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage, Bd. 3 (Freiburg im Breisgau u.a., 1995), Sp. 1–6; Edda Neubacher, Gerhard Bodendorfer, Karl Kertelge, Bernd J. Claret, Georg Baudler, Dieter Harmening, Hans-Walter Stork, Gerhard Lauer, ‚Teufel, I. Religionsgeschichtlich, II. Biblisch-theologisch; III. Theologie- und Dogmengeschichtlich; IV. Systematisch-theologisch, V. Praktisch-theologisch; VI. Frömmigkeitsgeschichtlich; VII. Ikonographisch; VIII. Neu-religiös; IX. Literatur‘, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Bd. 9 (2000), Sp. 1360–1370. Beide Artikel bieten umfassende Literaturhinweise. Vgl. auch Arnold Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 1997), S. 151–159 („2. Teufel und Dämonen“).



Abb. 1: Heilung eines Stummen (Stiftsbibliothek Lilienfeld, Codex 151, fol. 144va); nach: Edition (wie Anm. 2), Bd. 2, S. 566

Rede ist. Typisch ist etwa Ulrichs Warnung anlässlich der Heilung eines von einem ‚stummen Teufel‘ Besessenen (Abb. 1):

Est enim dyabolus humani generis inimicus, mortis inuentor, superbie institutor, caput scelerum, princeps omnium uiciorum, persuasor omnium uoluptatum. Ideo ne noceat, fugiatur.

Denn der Teufel ist der Feind des Menschengeschlechtes, der Erfinder des Todes, der Begründer des Hochmuts, das Haupt der Sünden, der Fürst aller Laster, der Überredungskünstler zu allen Ausschweifungen; darum möge man ihn fliehen, damit er keinen Schaden anrichte (145ra).

Dabei entwickelt Ulrich in den CC keine systematische Dämonologie; die Frage etwa nach dem Ursprung des Bösen und der Sünde wird nicht grundsätzlich diskutiert. Mittelalterlicher Grundüberzeugung entsprechend gehen die CC fraglos von der Existenz des Teufels und des Bösen aus, stellen aber z.B. nicht die Frage, ob das im Teufel verkörperte Böse als „personal gerichtete Extrapolition des in ‚dieser Welt‘ (Joh) wirkenden Bösen zu

erkennen“ ist⁵ oder ob das im Teufel verkörperte Böse als „ein substantiell Böses“ oder „eine kontingente Größe“ aufgefasst wird.⁶

In den folgenden Ausführungen soll gezeigt werden, welchen Platz, welche Rolle der Teufel, die Dämonen und böse Geister als Widerpart Gottes in den CC einnehmen, wie sie beschrieben werden, welche Orte des Teufels, der Dämonen und des Bösen im Jenseits und auf Erden benannt werden, welche Aussagen über den Teufel getroffen und wie Dämonen bezeichnet werden, mit welchen Wesen (zumeist Tieren) Teufel und Dämonen in naturkundlichen Deutungen verglichen werden und welchen Personen und Personengruppen sie gleichen. Auf diese Weise soll über zahlreiche phänomenologische Einzelaussagen über Teufel und Dämonen ein im Ergebnis geschlosseneres Bild von der ‚Gegenwelt‘ Gottes in den CC gewonnen werden.

2. Orte des Bösen, des Teufels und der Dämonen

2.1. Im Jenseits: Der Ort der Verdammten und der Ort der unerlösten Gerechten

Die *Hölle* ist der Ort der ewigen Verdammnis, Sitz des Teufels und der Dämonen. Bei den ‚Stätten der Unterwelt‘ unterscheidet Ulrich (in seiner in den CC-Text integrierten Bearbeitung des *Speculum humanae salvationis*) ‚die unterste Hölle der Verdammten, das Fegfeuer der Sünder und den Limbus der Heiligen‘ (*Quatuor* [?] *sunt loca infernorum, infimus dampnandorum, peccatorum purgandorum et sanctorum*, 156 rb XXVIII). Völlig konventionell ist es, die Hölle als den Ort der Verdammung und der ewigen Strafe für das Böse durch das ‚ewige Feuer‘ gekennzeichnet zu sehen; dieses Attribut ist ihr durch die Beschreibung des Ortes der Verdammten in der Apokalypse gegeben, als Gott beim Jüngsten Gericht all diejenigen, die nicht im ‚Buch des Lebens‘ verzeichnet sind, mit dem Teufel in das ewige Höllenfeuer verstößt (vgl. Apoc 20,10.14f.): *Jte, maledicti, in ignem eter<num>* (3rd; zum Feuer der Hölle vgl. 37rd, 58rb, 66rd, 66re, 79rc, 93rb, 104rb und zahlreiche weitere Belege).

Eine andere Qualität der Gottesferne ist mit der Vorstellung vom *limbus* gegeben, der als „Ort oder Zustand“ die Anschauung Gottes ausschloss.⁷ Es ist die ‚Vorhölle‘, der Ort der ‚Väter‘, die vor dem Erlösungswerk Chri-

⁵ Kertelge in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Bd. 9 (wie Anm. 4), Sp. 1364.

⁶ Claret in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Bd. 9 (wie Anm. 4), Sp. 1365.

⁷ Leo Scheffczyk, ‚Limbus‘, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (wie Anm. 4), Bd. 6 (1997), Sp. 936f., Zitat Sp. 936.

sti gerecht gelebt hatten. Der Limbus wird bei Ulrich mehrfach erwähnt (vgl. 7re, 47ra, 94rc, 95rb, 99ra, 102rc, 155va, 156rb XXVIII, 213ra), ist aber bei ihm nicht nur der Ort der Gottesferne, sondern das Reich des Todes, das vom Teufel und seinen Dämonen beherrscht wird. Bei der ausführlichen Behandlung der Passion Christi thematisiert Ulrich im Anschluss an das Karfreitagsgeschehen den Abstieg Christi in die ‚Vorhölle‘ (vgl. unten Abb. 2): Unter der Überschrift ‚Er führt die Heiligen aus der Vorhölle‘ (*Educit sanctos de limbo*) zitiert er die Verse seines Amtsvorgängers, des gelehrten Abtes Christan von Lilienfeld: *Tartara qui penetrat, tenebras fulgore decorat, /+ infernum spoliat, inde suos liberat*. ‚Der die Unterwelt durchdringt, erleuchtet die Dunkelheit mit seinem Blitzstrahl. Er entwaffnet die Unterwelt und befreit von dort die Seinen‘ (99v).⁸ Ulrich erläutert:

Sancti doctores scribunt, quod Christus Dei Filius in cruce iam mortuus deitate et anima simul ad inferna, scilicet limbum descenderunt, nec tamen corpus eis unitum deseruerunt et inde sanctos patres, qui pro originali ibi detinebantur culpa, potenter eduxerunt. ¶ Vnde cum Christo sancti descendentes angeli ‚Tollite portas!‘ clamabant, sancti patres in leticia iubilabant, dampnati, quia ibi relinquebantur, flebant, demones in supplicijs ululabant. Christus enim ad nos ad inferna descendit, cum in profundo peccatorum positos uisitare nos sua gracia non desistit, et inde nos liberat, cum delictorum indulgenciam misericorditer nobis donat.

Die heiligen Lehrer schreiben, dass Christus, der Sohn Gottes, unmittelbar nach seinem Verschenden am Kreuz gemeinsam mit Gottheit und Seele in die Unterwelt, nämlich die Vorhölle, hinabstieg; Gottheit und Seele haben aber dennoch nicht den Leib, der mit ihnen verbunden blieb, verlassen und aus der Unterwelt die heiligen Väter, die wegen der Erbsünde dort festgehalten wurden, machtvoll herausgeführt. ¶ Darum riefen die heiligen Engel, die mit Christus hinabstiegen: Macht weit die Pforten!, jubelten die heiligen Väter voll Freude, weinten die Verdammten, weil sie dort zurückgelassen wurden, heulten die Dämonen in ihren Qualen. Christus steigt zu uns in die Unterwelt hinab, wenn er uns unablässig in der Tiefe der Sünden mit seiner Gnade besucht, und er führt uns von dort befreit heraus, wenn er uns barmherzig den Nachlass der Schulden schenkt. (100ra)⁹

⁸ Christanus Campiliensis, *Versus concomitantes Compendium theologicæ veritatis* [...], Lilienfeld, Stiftsbibliothek, ms. 143, v. 203. Vgl. die Ausgabe der *Opera poetica* des Christanus Campiliensis durch Walter Zechmeister, 2 Bände, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio medievalis 19A/19B (Turnhout, 1992).

⁹ Vgl. auch 156r 31: Im Triumphzug führte Jesus die Gerechten aus der Unterwelt (*de inferno*).

Präfiguriert wird die Szene zum einen durch Abraham, der Loth und die anderen, die mit ihm in Gefangenschaft waren, siegreich zurückführte (vgl. Gen 14,16). Ulrich kommentiert die Szene:

Abraham aber, d.h. Christus, hat sie alle siegreich wieder in die Freiheit zurückgeführt, als er nach der Überwindung des Todes Adam selbst und die heiligen Väter machtvoll aus der Unterwelt herausführte und auf diese Weise die Wut der Dämonen siegreich niederstreckte (... *Adam et sanctos patres ab inferis potenter eduxit demonumque seuciam sic prostrauit*, 100rb).

Als weitere Präfiguration bezieht er die Tötung Davids durch Goliath (vgl. 1. Reg 17,50f.) auf Christi Überwindung des Teufels:

Hinc Goliath, qui interpretatur transmigratio, id est diabolus interfecit, quia cum de celo ad inferum transmigravit suamque potenciam ampliauit, eius indebitam magnificenciam totaliter minoraui, caput etiam eius, id est totum suum spoliū et gladium, id est potencie modum ipsi abstulit, ut non preualeat, quantum uelit, sicque de ipso omnimodam uictoriam populo suo, scilicet christiano plene dedit.

Von dem Augenblick an tötete er Goliath, zu deutsch „Hinüberschreiten“, d.h. den Teufel; denn als Christus aus dem Himmel in die Unterwelt hinüberschritt und seinen eigenen Machtbereich vergrößerte, verminderte er vollständig des Teufels ungebührliche Herrlichkeit; sogar sein Haupt, d.h. seine ganze Waffenrüstung und sein Schwert, d.h. das Maß seiner Macht nahm er ihm weg, damit er nicht mehr nach Belieben siegen könne. Und so schenkte Christus seinem Volke, nämlich den Christen einen in jeder Weise umfassenden Sieg über den Teufel. (100rc)¹⁰

Sodann schließt Ulrich zwei in typologischer Funktion angeführte ‚Naturgegebenheiten‘ an, zunächst mit Berufung auf das ‚Buch der Dinge‘:¹¹ Ein Hahn, der einen Sieg errungen hat, schlägt voller Begeisterung über seinen Sieg mit den Flügeln und kräht dabei. Auch er gleicht Christus:

Jta Christus noster gallus, qui sui cantus predicacione excitat dormitantes uictoriam fortem cepit, cum dyabolo ab inferni claustris sanctorum milia abstulit et recepit, et hac uictoria animatus uociferans se concussit, quando destructa morte sanctos patres ad paradisi collocans gaudia sue diuinitatis beatitudinem hijs influxit.

¹⁰ Goliath als Teufel: vgl. 71rc, 155ra, 155v 13, 172rc.

¹¹ Ulrichs Quellen kann hier nicht nachgegangen werden. Sie werden ausführlich dokumentiert im Quellenapparat unserer Edition (wie Anm. 2), Bd. 2, S. 11–159. Der Quellenbegriff ist hier jedoch sehr weit gefasst; vgl. Bd. 1, S. XXXII–XXXIV.

So hat Christus als unser Hahn, der durch die Predigt seines Krähens die Schläfer aufweckt, einen gewaltig großen Sieg errungen, als er Tausende von Heiligen dem Teufel aus den Verliesen der Hölle wegholte und zu sich nahm; und begeistert über diesen Sieg krähte er und schlug mit den Flügeln, als er nach Vernichtung des Todes den heiligen Vätern die Glückseligkeit seiner Gottheit einflößte, indem er sie in die Freuden des Paradieses versetzte. (100rd)¹²

Mit Berufung auf Isidor von Sevilla und Plinius bezieht Ulrich zum Abschluss seiner Interpretation der Höllenfahrt Christi den Kampf zwischen dem wendigen Falken (*herodius*) und dem ihn angreifenden schwerfälligen Geier (*uultur*), der sich schließlich selbst zu Tode stürzt, auf Christi Bezwingung des Teufels:

Sic et Christus nobilissimus herodius cum uulture, scilicet dyabolo pugnavit, quando dyabolus contra Christum plebem iudaicam concitavit. Sed Christus eius impetui cessit, cum mortem voluntarius sustinuit, et sic grauis in malicia uultur, id est diabolus semet in mortem allisit, cum ipsum Christum cruciandum perpetuis flammis iehennalibus reconmisit.

So hat auch Christus, der beste Edelfalke, mit dem Geier, nämlich dem Teufel, gekämpft, als der Teufel das jüdische Volk gegen Christus aufstachelte; doch Christus wich seinem Angriff aus, als er freiwillig den Tod erlitt, und so stürzte der Geier, d.h. der in seiner Bosheit schwerfällige Teufel, sich selbst zu Tode, als Christus ihn der Folter durch ewige Höllenflammen übergab. (100re)

2.2. *Irdische Orte*

Die Verortung des Bösen ist aber nicht nur im Jenseits festzumachen, sondern Orte des Teufels und der Dämonen sind auch auf Erden, im diesseitigen Leben zu finden. Prominentes Beispiel ist *Babylon*, negativ besetzt nicht nur als Ort der Gefangenschaft des Volkes Israel und der Sprachenverwirrung, als deren Gegenbild das pfingstliche Sprachenwunder verstanden wird (156r 34), sondern explizit als Ort der Hölle, der Höllenstrafe und des Teufels. Jesus hat nach den Worten des Johannesevangeliums (Io 8,28) sein Leiden vorausgesagt, aber die Juden haben ihn nicht verstanden. Diese Szene sieht Ulrich durch die vergebliche Warnung der Juden vor der Babylonischen Gefangenschaft vorgebildet (vgl. Jer 20,4f.). Jeremias steht für einen jeden Prediger des Herrn, der aller Welt voraussagt, man müsse für seine Sünden eine Gefangenschaft erleiden, d.h.

¹² An anderer Stelle steht ein weißer Hahn, der Löwen verjagt, für den demütigen und frommen Prediger, der den Teufel (den ‚brüllenden Löwen‘) überwindet (138rd).



Abb. 3: Sedechias, der Götzenverehrer, wird nach Babylon verschleppt (Stiftsbibliothek Lilienfeld, Codex 151, fol. 141vc); ebd. S. 563

man werde nach Babylon, nämlich in die Stadt der ewigen Verwirrung (*in Babilonem, scilicet confusionis eterne ciuitatem*) geführt. ‚Wenn sie auf die Ermahnung des Propheten hin Gott und sich selbst richtig erkannt hätten, hätte sie der König von Babylon, d.h. der Teufel (*rex Babilonis, id est diabolus*), ganz sicher nicht gefangen genommen‘ (44rb). Die Gefangenschaft ist ein Bild für die Sündenstrafe der ewigen Verdammnis (*captiuita[s]... eterne dampnacionis* 61rb). König Babylons, des Ortes der Verwirrung (*confusio*), ist der Teufel (*rex dyabolus*), in seiner Sippe befinden sich die Schriftgelehrten und Pharisäer sowie die durch ihre Verblendung verfluchten Juden (*Iudeorum populus maledictus* 89rc). Wie Sedekias nach seinem Abfall von Gott und der Anbetung der Götzen nach Babylon verschleppt wurde (vgl. 4. Reg 25,7; Abb. 3), so ergeht es dem Sünder, der die Gerechtigkeit Gottes verspürt,

quando ipsum rex Babilonis, id est dyabolus, cuius se seruicio mancipauerat, crudeliter captiuabit et in Babilonem, que interpretatur *confusio*, id est eterne malediccionis confusionisque dampnacionem in misericorditer captum puniendum perpetuo secum ducit.

wenn ihn der König von Babylon, d.h. der Teufel, in dessen Dienst er sich verkauft hatte, grausam gefangen nehmen wird und ihn gefesselt und zur ewigen Pein mit sich nach Babylon, zu deutsch „Verwirrung“, d.h. in die Verdammnis der ewigen Verfluchung und Verwirrung ohne Erbarmen abführt (142rc).



Abb. 4: Höllenorte mit den auf Zypern im Feuer umherfliegenden Fliegen
(Stiftsbibliothek Lilienfeld, Codex 151, fol. 233v); ebd. S. 654

In einer Predigt¹³ über das jüngste Gericht, in dem der Herr alles durch Feuer erneuert, verweisen alle vier dort genannten und gezeigten Präfigurationen (vgl. Abb. 4) auf das ewige Höllenfeuer und die Verdammung des Teufels, der Dämonen und der Bösen in der Hölle: Feuer- und Schwefelregen über der Pentapolis (Gen 19,24), der chaldäische Feuerofen (Dn 3,22), das natürliche Holzfeuer und bestimmte Fliegen, welche *Zypern* im geistigen Sinn zum Ort der Hölle machen (ich beschränke mich auf die Auslegung dieser Szene). Zu dieser ungewöhnlichen Aussage findet Ulrich durch Verweis auf Plinius (*Naturalis Historia* 11,36), wonach es dort vierbeinige Fliegen gebe, die unverehrt das Feuer ertragen, jedoch außerhalb des Feuers sogleich sterben müssten. Wieder – wie zuvor bei Babylon und sonst ebenfalls durchgängig – setzt Ulrich zur Deutung auf den Höllenort und die Fliegen als Dämonen bei der Etymologie des Namens an:

Cyprus interpretatur *meror* uel *tristitia* et significat infernum, in quo est luctus dampnatorum perpetuus atque meror. In quo Cypro, id est inferno volant musce, id est demones et anime iam dampnate, et hoc in igne perpetuo adhuc ipsis eternaliter preparato, et hee musce sunt quadrupedes, quia nisi sentiunt super se iudicium seueritatis, sub se nullam gratiam miserationis, ante se diuturnitatem perpetuitatis, iuxta se duriciam pessime societatis, intra se maliciam proprie iniquitatis. Hoc ergo iudicium, o homo, sit tibi speculum equitatis.

Zypern heißt übersetzt „Trauer“ oder „Traurigkeit“ und bezeichnet die Hölle, in der ewiges Leid und endloser Schmerz der Verdammten herrschen. In diesem Zypern, d.h. in der Hölle, schwirren Fliegen, d.h. Dämonen und schon verdammte Seelen, umher, und zwar im ewigen Feuer, das ihnen noch in alle Ewigkeit bereitet ist; und diese Fliegen haben vier Beine; denn sie spüren über sich nur die Strenge des Gerichtes, unter sich keinerlei barmherzige Gnade, vor sich die lang andauernde Ewigkeit, neben sich die Härte der bösesten Gesellschaft, in sich die Schlechtigkeit der eigenen Verderbtheit. Dieses Gericht sei dir also, o Mensch, ein Spiegel der Gerechtigkeit (234re).

Ein anderer vom Teufel besetzter Ort ist Ägypten, in etymologisierender Deutung ‚Finsternis‘ genannt; es ist durchgängig negativ besetzt als Zeichen für Bosheit und sündiges Handeln und das Herz des Sünders, für die ‚Finsternis‘ des Gewissens, den Unglauben, die Welt mit ihrer Dunkelheit und Enge.¹⁴ Die Angriffe des Pharao auf das Volk Israel bei seiner

¹³ Zur Gattungsfrage der Texte (Predigt, Predigtentwurf, Predigtskizze, Postille) Suntrup in der Edition (wie Anm. 2), Bd. 1, S. XXVII.

¹⁴ Nachweise in unserer Edition (wie Anm. 2), Register der Namen, Begriffe und Bedeutungen, s.v. Ägypten, Bd. 2, S. 263.

Flucht aus Ägypten wird mit den Attacken des Teufels auf die Menschen, konkret mit den Versuchungen in der ‚Einöde des Mönchslebens‘ verglichen: Herr über ‚Ägypten‘ ist der *dyabolus* (34ra, vgl. 123rc). Den Wagen des Pharao mit allen Lastern, die ins Verderben führen, ‚d.h. die Pracht des Pharao, d.h. des Teufels, versenkt der Herr mit seinem Heer, das alle Bösewichter bilden, im Meer, wenn Gott sie in die Hölle stürzt und dort begräbt‘ (*Currus, id est pompam pharaonis, id est dyaboli Dominus in mare proicit cum suo exercitu, qui sunt omnes iniqui, cum eos in infernum deicit et demergit* 255r).

3. Personifikationen des Bösen: Teufel und Dämonen

Die Texte der CC verbinden im Zyklus des Kirchenjahres und der Heiligenfeste durchgängig die allegorisch-typologische Deutung der Geschehnisse mit der tropologischen Mahnung zu rechtem Leben und der Warnung vor den Nachstellungen des Teufels. Er ist zu hassen und zu verfolgen, weil er Zwietracht sät, den Menschen vom guten Handeln abhält, die Seele tötet und die Tugenden raubt (32ra). Der Teufel sucht den Menschen zu fangen (5rd; 199ra), quält die Bösen und ist mit diesen in den ewigen Feuerflammen zur ewigen Verdammung vereinigt (156v 41). Er ist der Vater des Stolzes (36re, 48rc), der Fürst ‚der Welt und des Fleisches‘ (142rb, vgl. 17rc). Auch seine körperlichen Eigenschaften lassen auf seine Laster schließen: Seine Bosheit macht ihn blind (36rb). Wie ein Neride, ein mit Zottelhaaren bedecktes menschenähnliches Monster im Meer, hat er ein struppiges Fell (Abb. 5), dadurch dem Christophorus gleichend, als dieser eine Zeitlang unwissend dem Teufel als dem höchsten Herrn diene (197rd).

Die Aussagen über das Böse, welches im Teufel und den Dämonen nahezu omnipräsent ist, dürften so vielfältig und intensiv mahnend ausfallen, weil die CC, deren Thema das Heilswerk Christi ist, eindringlich dem Leser des Textes, dem Betrachter der Bilder und dem Hörer des Predigtwortes in das Bewusstsein rufen wollen, wie sehr das durch Christus erwirkte persönliche Heil durch das Wirken des ‚Widersachers‘ gefährdet ist. In der Furcht vor dem personifizierten Bösen erweist sich der Text als typisch spätmittelalterlich. „Die Macht des Teufels, so drängt es sich auf, muß dem mittelalterlichen Menschen überwältigend erschienen sein“.¹⁵

¹⁵ Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität im Mittelalter* (wie Anm. 4), S. 153.



Abb. 5: Der Teufel als Neride (Stiftsbibliothek Lilienfeld, Codex 151, fol. 196vd); ebd. S. 617

So gibt es zum einen zahlreiche *Personen* und *Personengruppen*, die mit dem Teufel verglichen werden: Aus der Bibel bekannte Personengruppen sind die Äthiopier (145rc) und Araber (197rc), beide aufgrund ihrer schwarzen Hautfarbe, die Amalechiter (40rc), die Amorrhäer (97b) und die Chaldäer (welche Dämonen und Verdammte in der Hölle bezeichnen, 234rc). Zu den abstrakten Gruppen zählen Jäger (15rd, 35rd, 142re, 239re), Neiderfüllte (178re), Seeräuber (158rf) und Israels Feinde (16rb, 213rb: Dämonen).

Häufiger werden biblische Einzelpersonen als Verkörperungen des Teufels verstanden. Um zu zeigen, in welcher Weise kontextbedingt die Auslegung erfolgt, sei als ein Beispiel die Deutung des Königs Eglon erläutert. Über ihn handelt Ulrich in der Betrachtung des Evangeliums vom Quatembersamstag im Advent, also in der Zeit der Erwartung des Heilandes (Lc 3,6 mit Zitat aus Is 40,5 *Videbit omnis caro salutare Dei*). Als ein Typus der Errettung der Christen durch den kommenden Erlöser wird auf die Errettung der ‚Söhne Israels, die wegen ihrer Sünden in großer Bedrängnis waren‘, durch Aoth (Ehud) verwiesen. Dieser hat den Moabiterkönig Eglon, als das Volk Israel bußfertig war, bei der Zahlung des Tributs erdolcht und dadurch die Israeliten von der jahrelangen Knechtschaft der Moabiter befreit (vgl. 3. Iud 3,12–22). In einer kleinschrittigen, die Etymologie der Namen einbeziehenden Auslegung der Szene zieht Ulrich die Parallele zur Befreiung der Büsser von den Machenschaften des Teufels:

[...] penitentes, qui si peccando delinquant, tamen penitendo delicta recognoscunt, quibus Dominum inuocantibus mittitur saluator Aoth, qui interpretatur *gloriacio*, id est euangelicorum preceptorum Saluatoris deuota obseruacio, qui regi Eglon, qui interpretatur *uitulus mortis*, scilicet dyabolo, qui iustorum grauamine gaudens salit tamquam uitulus de armento, vna manu velut munera offerens, id est humane carnis tegmine a dyaboli cognitione se subtrahens, altera manu, id est deitatis potencia gladio sue iusticie ipsum occidens suum populum liberauit, id est eius potestatem deleuit penitus et contriuit.

Wenn sie [die Israeliten, d.h. die Büsser] nun den Herrn anrufen, wird ihnen als Retter Aoth gesandt, zu deutsch „Rühmen“, d.h. die fromme Befolgung der Gebote des Erlösers im Evangelium; dieser reichte König Eglon, der übersetzt heißt „Kalb des Todes“, nämlich dem Teufel, der sich freut über die Beschwerden der Gerechten und, einem Kalbe ähnlich, von der Koppel wegspringt, mit der einen Hand gleichsam ein Geschenk, d.h. er entzog sich durch die Verkleidung in menschliches Fleisch der Kenntnis durch den Teufel. Mit der anderen Hand aber, d.h. mit der Gewalt der Gottheit, tötet er ihn durch das Schwert seiner Gerechtigkeit und befreite so sein Volk, d.h. er zerstörte und vernichtete vollständig seine Gewalt (10rc; vgl. auch 156rb 29).

Weiterhin werden als biblische Personen auf den Teufel bezogen: Abimelech (156r 38), Absalon (108rc), Amalech (27rc), Babels König (41rc, 44rb, 142rc), der Perserkönig Cyrus (156r 30, wo Teufel und Dämonen gleichgesetzt werden), Goliath (71rc und e, 100rc, 155ra 13, 172rc), Herodes (18rb, 19ra, 20re, 199ra, 199rc), Holofernes (156r 30, 161rc), Ismael (200rc), Joab (86rc, 177rc, 243rc), Joram (48rc), Madian (27rc: Teufel und böse Menschen), Nabal, der Gatte Abigails (195rc), Nabuchodonosor (13rc), Nikanor, Feind der Juden (216rc), der Pharao (34ra, 123rc) mit seinem Lasterwagen (dem *currus Pharaonis* als Zeichen der Pracht des Teufels, 255v), Samson, der 300 Füchse in die Felder der Philister treibt (25rb), Saul, der David verfolgt (12rb, 57rc, 119rb), der Priester töten lässt (165rc) und von einem bösen Geist besessen ist (124rc), der Feldherr Sisara (156rb 30) und Cyrus (ebd.), der König von Sodom, der das Leben seiner Untertanen erbittet (36rb), und der entmachtete Zamri (245rc).

4. Teufel und Dämonen in der Tierdeutung

Die Warnung vor dem Bösen kann in den CC so facettenreich ausgestaltet werden, weil es die Besonderheit dieses Textes ist, die Gegebenheiten der *Naturkunde* in die allegorisch-typologische Deutung systematisch mit einzubeziehen. Konkret heißt dies, dass eine große Anzahl von *Tieren*, im Ausnahmefall auch andere *res significantes* der Natur wie z.B. Pflanzen

oder Gestirne, deutungsrelevant werden, indem ihre Eigenschaften im übertragenen Sinn zur Auslegung des Bedeutungsträgers führen; die Proprietäten nehmen die Funktion eines *tertium comparationis* ein. Durch die Übertragung auf die schlechten Eigenschaften des Teufels und der Dämonen können mit geradezu verblüffender Bandbreite der Deutung Tiere somit zum Symbol des Bösen werden. Einige (ausgeführte) Beispiele mögen dies verdeutlichen.

Im *Salamander*, der immer im Feuer lebt, ist der Teufel zu erkennen, der nur noch im höllischen Feuer zu leben vermochte, nachdem er sich gegen Gottes Gnade und Gerechtigkeit erhoben hatte. ‚Dieser Salamander [der Teufel] hat unter allen giftigen Tieren die größte Macht zu schaden, weil er es uns neidet, dorthin zu kommen, wohin er doch selbst in Ewigkeit nicht wieder hinaufsteigen wird‘ (138re).

Die *Schlange* gehört zu den gebräuchlichsten, weil bereits biblisch belegten Zeichen für den Teufel oder für die Dämonen, seine ‚Diener‘, so auch in den CC-Auslegungen (vgl. 5rd, 25rc, 29rd, 37re, 53re, 70re, 94re, 124rd, 124re, 127re, 145rc, 145rd, 156r 30, 180re, 189rd, 200re). Als ein Beispiel sei eine Naturtypologie angeführt, welche die Epistel vom ersten Adventssonntag auslegt: die Mahnung zur Wachsamkeit bei der Ankunft des Herrn (Rom 13,11–14). Ulrich mahnt durch seine aus Jacobus, Solinus und Plinius‘ entnommene Deutung die mit dem schläfrigen Krokodil verglichenen Ordensleute vor den lebensbedrohenden Nachstellungen des Teufels:

Jacobus, Solinus et Plinius dicunt, quod cocodrillus aperto ore dormiens, ydros serpens limo se inuoluit et sic faucibus illabatur cocodrilli, qui eum in medio ventris perforans saluus egreditur, et sic moritur cocodrillus. ¶ Cocodrillus, qui superiorem mouet mandibulam, quemlibet religiosum significat, qui semper debet deuota contemplacione perficere Dei uelle. Qui si incautus aperto ore, id est sine sui custodia dormierit, tunc serpens, id est dyabolus, qui sanctis semper insidiatur, limosis, id est delectabilibus terre<n>itatibus se inuoluens sic religioso illabatur perforans ei ventrem, id est mundi dulcedinibus alliciens gulositatibus firmat mentem, et sic moritur, id est in seculi vanitatibus quoad mortem anime sepelitur. Et ideo iugiter est uigilandum et ad aduentum dominicum se totis mentis conatibus preparandum. VLRICUS.

Wenn das Krokodil mit offenem Munde schläft, hüllt sich die Wasserschlange in Schlamm und gleitet so in den Schlund des Krokodils, durchfrisst die Mitte des Bauches des Krokodils und schlüpft selbst heil hervor; und auf diese Weise stirbt das Krokodil. Das Krokodil, das nur die obere Kinnlade bewegt, bezeichnet jeden Ordensmann, der in beständiger frommer Betrachtung den Willen Gottes vollbringen muss. Wenn er nun unvorsichtig mit offenem

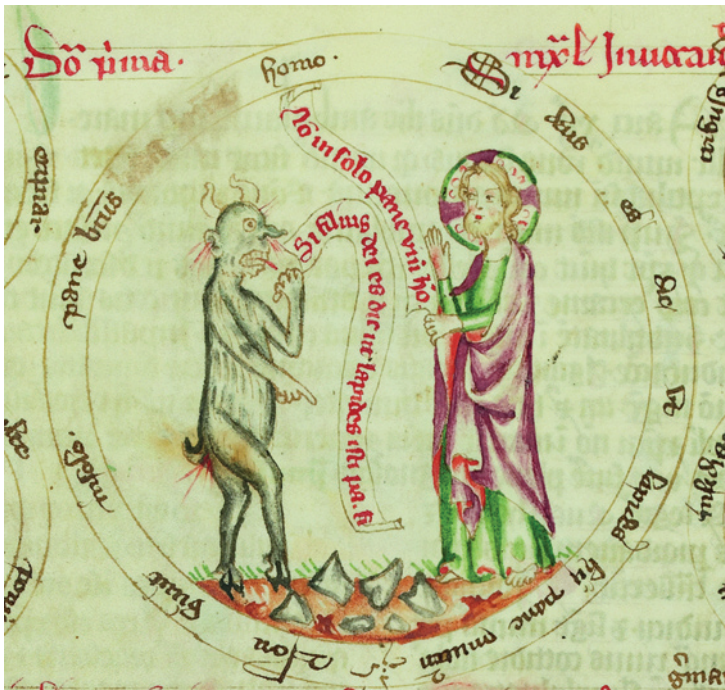


Abb. 6: Erste Versuchung Jesu (Stiftsbibliothek Lilienfeld, Codex 151, fol. 33va); ebd. S. 455

Mund, d.h. ohne auf sich acht zu haben, eingeschlafen ist, dann hüllt sich die Schlange, d.h. der Teufel, der den Heiligen ohne Unterlass nachstellt, in Schlamm, d.h. in Ergötzungen dieser Welt, und gleitet so in den Ordensmann hinein und zerfrisst ihm den Bauch, d.h. er lockt ihn mit den Genüssen dieser Welt und macht seinen Geist durch Gaumenlust krank; [*firmare* hier gleich *infirmare*] und so stirbt der Ordensmann, d.h. er wird in den Vergänglichkeiten dieser Welt begraben, bis seine Seele erstorben ist; und deshalb muss man allezeit wachsam sein und sich mit allen Anstrengungen des Geistes auf die Ankunft des Herrn vorbereiten. Ulrich. (5rd)

Der *Pelikan*, der zwar gewöhnlich, so auch in den CC, christologisch, also positiv gedeutet wird (vgl. 30rd, 94re, 130rd), kann jedoch aufgrund seiner Fangweise auch zum Bild des Teufels werden. Ulrich führt dies zum Evangelium vom ersten Sonntag in der Fastenzeit aus, das die erste Versuchung Jesu in der Wüste durch den Teufel (Abb. 6), zuerst durch Gaumenlust (*gula*), zum Thema hat (Mt 4,1–11).

Die Versuchung betrifft jeden Menschen, besonders aber denjenigen, der ein monastisches Leben führt:

Jta quamdiu homo dyaboli seruicio mancipatus fuerit, ipsum quietum dimittit, sed cum desertum religionis intrauerit, eum mox temptacionibus subprimere non desistit. Aggreditur igitur dyabolus Christum primo per gulam, et hoc post ieiunium, contra quod opposuit Dominus diuinam gratiam dicens: Non in solo pane et cetera.

Solange er im Dienste des Teufels steht, lässt er ihn in Ruhe; aber sobald er die Einöde des Mönchslebens betreten hat, bedrückt er ihn alsbald ohne Unterlass mit seinen Versuchungen. Der Teufel greift also Christus zuerst durch die Gaumenlust an, und dies tut er unmittelbar, nachdem Christus gefastet hatte. Gegen diese Versuchung setzt der Herr die göttliche Gnade, indem er spricht: Nicht vom Brot allein usw. (34ra)

Als biblischer Typus fungiert zunächst die Paradiesszene (Gen 3,4–6), die in antithetischer Typologie zur Versuchung Christi in Bezug gesetzt wird:

Nam sicut dyabolus deceptis primis parentibus per gulam eos cum posteris in mortem precipitauit, ita necessarie secundus Adam eodem temptatus ordine temptatorem superans, prius perditos a mortis vinculis eripiens liberauit, et sicut per gustum primi parentis culpa sumpsit initium, sic iam cauendum est nobis, ne sicut ille per escam paradisi meruit egressum, ita et nos ab eius arceamur ingressu, quia sicut tunc, sic et nunc dyabolus inpingnare nos cottidie non desistit, cui semper est per fidei opera viriliter resistendum.

Denn wie der Teufel die Stammeltern zuerst durch die Gaumenlust verführt hatte und sie dann mit den Nachkommen in den Tod stürzte, so musste notwendigerweise der zweite Adam nach derselben Ordnung versucht werden und den Versucher überwinden; und er entriss die vorher Verlorenen den Fesseln des Todes und machte sie frei; und wie durch das Essen des Stammvaters die Schuld ihren Anfang nahm, so müssen auch wir uns hüten, dass wir uns nicht durch eine Speise ebenso vom Eintritt in das Paradies abhalten lassen, wie ja jener Stammvater wegen einer Speise aus dem Paradies gejagt zu werden verdiente. Denn wie damals, so hört der Teufel auch jetzt nicht auf, uns täglich zu bekämpfen; ihm muss man stetig durch die Werke des Glaubens tapferen Widerstand entgegensetzen (34rb).¹⁶

Auch im zweiten alttestamentlichen Typus, dem Genesisbericht von Esau, der seinem Bruder für ein billiges Linsengericht sein Erstgeburtsrecht verkauft (Gen 25, 29–34), sieht Ulrich in der Motivierung durch *gula* das Wirken des Teufels (34rc). Zwei Naturallegorien, die in typologischer

¹⁶ Geradezu musterhaft ist an diesem Beispiel zu zeigen, wie sich in antithetischer Typologie die Elemente der Steigerung und des Gegensatzes miteinander verbinden: Adams Fessel wird durch den zweiten Adam, Christus, gelöst, der Sündentod wird durch Christus aufgehoben; tropologisch schließt sich die Warnung vor der Verführungsmacht des Teufels an.



Abb. 7: Der Teufel als gefräßiger Pelikan (Stiftsbibliothek Lilienfeld, Codex 151, fol. 33ve); ebd. S. 455

Funktion eingesetzt werden, schließen sich an: zunächst ein aus dem ‚Experimentator‘ abgeleiteter Bericht von der trächtigen Sau, die eine Fehlgeburt erleidet, nachdem sie, durch *gula* angetrieben, unmäßig viel Eicheln gefressen hatte (34rd). Die Gefräßigkeit, die dem Pelikan (Abb. 7) zuerkannt wird, führt sodann abschließend zu einer aus ‚Aristoteles und Isidor‘ gewonnenen Deutung zum Rahmenthema der Predigt, der Versuchung und Verführung durch den Teufel:

Aristotiles et Ysidorus scribunt, quod onocrotalus¹⁷ – vnuogel – auis gulosa rostrum ad modum gurgustii in aqua tenet et sic incautos pisces capit. ¶ Sic dyabolus omne mortalium genus in uentrem sue malicie per gulositatem deglutire gestiens rostrum, id est omnem temptationis modum ad modum gurgustii, id est deceptorii consilii in aqua ponit, id est sub alia boni specie inmittit et sic pisces incautos, id est simplices et innocentes populos ad explendam ingluuiem malicie sue capit. Hec tamen auis Cretam insulam delata statim moritur, quia dyabolica temptatio Christo applicata facillime Dei adiutorio superatur.

Aristoteles und Isidor schreiben: Der Pelikan ist ein gefräßiger Vogel und hält den Schnabel wie eine Reuse in das Wasser und fängt auf diese Weise unvorsichtige Fische. ¶ So handelt auch der Teufel: Er will durch die Fresslust das ganze Menschengeschlecht in den Bauch seiner Schlechtigkeit

¹⁷ Gemeint ist offenbar der *Pelecanus Onocrotalus*, übersetzt auch mit ‚Kropfgans‘ oder ‚Fischadler‘.

hinunterschlucken und hält seinen Schnabel, d.h. jedwede Art von Versuchung, nach Art einer Reuse, d.h. eines verführerischen Rates, in das Wasser, d.h. unter dem heuchlerischen Schein des Guten; und so fängt er unvorsichtige Fische, d.h. einfache und unschuldige Menschen, um den Kropf seiner Schlechtigkeit zu füllen. Dieser Vogel stirbt jedoch, sobald man ihn zur Insel Kreta bringt; denn wenn man die Versuchung des Teufels mit Christus zusammenbringt, wird sie sehr leicht mit Hilfe Gottes überwunden (34re).

Häufig gleicht der Teufel einem *Drachen*: Aus naturkundlichen Schriften berichtet Ulrich, dass die Elefantenkuh ihr Junges im Wasser gebiert, damit es aufstehen kann und nicht von den Drachen (*dracones*) belästigt wird. In spiritueller Deutung schützt sich damit die gläubige Seele vor dem verpestenden Drachen, dem Teufel (*draco pestifer, scilicet dyabolus*, 112rd). Der Drache (*draco – dyabolus*) lässt sich als einziger nicht vom süßen Duft des ‚edlen Panthers Christus‘ anlocken, ‚weil ihn seine widerspenstige Bosheit (*obstinata malicia*) verhärtet hat‘ (117rd).

Am Fest des hl. Märtyrers Georg, des Drachentöters (Abb. 8), zieht Ulrich eine Parallele zum Bericht des Buches Daniel, wonach Daniel einen Drachen mit Bissen von brennendem Werg tötete (vgl. Dan 14,23–27; Abb. 9). Eine ausführliche Deutung der Kampfszene schließt sich an:

Auch den geistlichen Drachen, d.h. den Teufel (*Spiritualem eciam draconem, id est diabolum*), hat Georg getötet, als er den falschen Glauben von sich warf und sich bis zum Tode dem Willen des Herrn unterordnete. Denn wenn jemand diesen Drachen, d.h. den wütenden Teufel (*draconem, id est diabolum seuientem*) töten will, dann wird er Bissen brennenden Wergs, d.h. beständige Anrufungen flammender Gedanken, in den Händen, d.h. in allen Handlungen, tragen, d.h. vollbringen müssen; mit diesen Schlägen wird der Drache getötet und dem Diener Gottes von seiner Gnade zur Ausübung des Militärdienstes Christi geholfen (177rb).

Weiterhin wird die Geschichte vom Kampf des Drachen gegen den Elefanten (Abb. 10) typologisch auf St. Georg bezogen und als Zeichen des Widerstands der Frommen und Heiligen gegen die Verführungen des Teufels gedeutet:

Plinius et Solinus dicunt, quod draco volens hominem in silua ledere, tunc elephas se opponens pro homine pugnat cum dracone. ¶ Per elephantem beatus Georius designatur, qui singulari castitate preditus cum dracone pugnavit, quando, ut in eius habetur legenda, ab eius morsu venenoso uirginem, scilicet regis filiam liberauit. Sic quique faciunt sancti et deuoti, qui draconi, id est dyabolo homini deuoto et simplici per deceptiones fraudulentas nocere uolenti tam uiriliter se opponunt et pro eis morti et periculo se exponunt, quod tandem ipsum interficiunt et hominem in mundi deuijs



Abb. 8: Georg besiegt den Drachen, Christus den Teufel (Stiftsbibliothek Lilienfeld, Codex 151, fol. 176va); ebd. S. 597



Abb. 9: Daniel tötet den Drachen (Stiftsbibliothek Lilienfeld, Codex 151, fol. 176vb); ebd. S. 597



Abb. 10: Der Elefant kämpft gegen den Drachen (Stiftsbibliothek Lilienfeld, Codex 151, fol. 176ve); ebd. S. 597

aberrantem liberant sicque faciunt, ut ipsum ad propria, scilicet regna celestia deferant et deducant.

Plinius und Solinus sagen: Wenn der Drache einen Menschen im Walde verletzen will, dann stellt sich dem Drachen der Elefant entgegen und kämpft aufseiten des Menschen mit dem Drachen. ¶ Durch den Elefanten wird der heilige Georg bezeichnet; er war mit einzigartiger Keuschheit begabt und kämpfte mit dem Drachen, als er – wie in seiner Lebensbeschreibung steht – vor seinem giftigen Biss eine Jungfrau, nämlich die Tochter des Königs, befreite. So tun alle Heiligen und Frommen, die sich dem Drachen, d.h. dem Teufel, der dem frommen und einfachen Menschen durch verführerische Täuschungen schaden will, so tapfer entgegenwerfen und sich selbst für sie <die Bedrohten> der Todesgefahr aussetzen, dass sie ihn <den Teufel-Drachen> schließlich töten und den Menschen, der auf den Irrwegen der Welt vom rechten Weg abkommt, befreien und so bewirken, dass sie ihn nach Hause, nämlich in das Himmelreich, geleiten und führen. (177re)

Die ebenfalls aus Plinius referierte Erzählung vom Drachen, der vom Baum auf den Elefanten springt und ihn dann tötet, indem er ihm das Blut aussaugt, wird am Festtag des heiligen Urban nicht nur auf die Bedrohung des Papstes, sondern wiederum auch auf die tödliche Bedrohung durch die Verführungskraft des Teufels bezogen:

Oder der Drache bezeichnet den Teufel (*Vel draco significat dyabolum*), der plötzlich vom Baume der weltlichen Lust und Begierde auf den Elefanten, d.h. auf den gerechten und schlichten Menschen, springt und ihn tötet, wenn er ihm die Annehmlichkeiten der Welt vor Augen führt und alle Tugenden,

die er einmal besessen hatte, vollständig aus ihm heraussaugt und tötet und ihn auf diese Weise in der Einöde der Verdammung im Stich lässt (183rd).

Wie unter dem Peredoxion-Baum, einem Baum im Morgenland, die Tauben vor dem Drachen sicher sind, so sind die Gläubigen vor den bösen Geistern sicher (*a draconibus, id est a malignis spiritibus sunt secure*). Denn unter dem Schutz des heiligen Kreuzes sind sie in Sicherheit vor der Anfechtung der Bösen und fallen nicht den Dämonen zur Beute (213re). – Im Bildzyklus der Tugenden und Laster deutet Ulrich die Darstellung der Demut: Auf den Schild, den die *humilitas*-Gestalt führt, ist ein niedergetreter Drache aufgemalt, ‚weil einzig der Demütige den Dämon wirklich überwindet‘ (*quia solus uere humilis superat demonem* 250r). Da der Neid dem Teufel eigen ist (vgl. 178re), zieht der personifizierte Neid auf einem Drachen in den Kampf; ‚denn die neidische Seele verdorrt durch ihr Gift, das voll ist von Schlechtigkeit‘ (252Av).

Damit sind nur einige wenige Tiere etwas ausführlicher vorgestellt, in denen der Teufel oder das Teuflisch-Dämonische Gestalt annimmt. Weitere auf den Teufel bezogene Tierdeutungen können und sollen hier nur noch aufgelistet werden. So wird der Teufel weiterhin verglichen mit einem wütenden, reißenden Bären (*ursus* 111rc), einem im Kampf gegen das Wiesel unterlegenen Basilisken (*basiliscus* 177rd), mit Bussarden (*alices*: höllische Dämonen, *demones infernales* 231rd), dem Carabo-Fisch, der viele andere Fische verschlingt (*carobo* 216rd), der Weihe (*milvus*, eine Falkenart, 10rd; vgl. zum Falken 52re, 105re: *maligni spiritus*), feuerresistenten Fliegen (Dämonen und schon verdammte Seelen, *demones et anime iam dampnate* 234re), einer Fußschlange (*dracoconpes serpens*) mit Frauenkopf (der vom Teufel besessene, Jesus täuschende Judas 80re), und dem Habicht, der einen nachts gefangenen Vogel erst am nächsten Morgen freilässt (*accipiter* 67rd, höllische Habichte: Dämonen 116rd, *infernales accipitres* 122re, *accipiter: rapax dyabolus* 174rd, *accipitres infernales: demonnes animas ad tartara rapientes* 216re).

Hunde werden ambivalent gedeutet: Der molossische Hund (*molosus bestia*, Dogge) als starkes, wildes Tier steht für den Teufel (169rd), ebenso der reißende, tollwütige Hund (*dyabolus canis infernalis* 160re). Auch der Jagdhund als Bild der durch Anfechtungen Qual bereitenden Höllenhunde ist negativ festgelegt (55rd). Kontextbedingt steht hingegen der Hirtenhund (*canis pro custodia gregis*), der die Herde gegen den Wolf verteidigt, für Christus, der die Gläubigen gegen den im Hinterhalt lauernden Teufel (den Wolf) verteidigt (111rd).

Weitere Tiere, mit denen der Teufel bezeichnet wird, sind die Hundsfliegen (*cinomie, id est musce canine*) über Ägypten (243re), die Hyäne (*bestia corocraces*, über ihre schlechten Eigenschaften gedeutet 48re), die Krähe (*cornix*), die den Adler (Christus) angreift (36rd), die Kröten (*botraces*), die durch die Bitterkeit der Raute vertrieben werden wie der Teufel durch die Dornenkrone (208rd), der Leopard, den man durch Knoblauchgeruch vertreiben kann wie den ‚wütenden, zermalmenden und auf der Suche, wen er verschlingen könnte, umherschleichenden Teufel‘ (191re), der Löwe (*leo* 25rd, 111rc, 175rc, 138rd, 156r 29, 202re, 225rc), der Löwentöter (*leocophana bestia*), der im Kampf sich mit Urin behandelt und dadurch sich und den Löwen tötet (178re) oder dessen Asche den Löwen tötet (25rd), der überaus giftige Schlangenfisch (*serpentinus piscis*) mit üblem Atem, der gegen den Wal mit wohlriechendem Atem kämpft (70re), der Strauß (*strucio*), dessen Ei zerbrochen wird (224re), der Wolf (*lupus infernalis*, ‚Höllenvolf‘) mit seiner Raubgier (7rd), seiner Flucht vor dem Geräusch zusammengeschlagener Steine (64rd), seiner Vertreibung durch den tapferen Hirtenhund (111rd) und seiner Bedrohung des Nests der Turteltaube (228rd); oder der Teufel gleicht ganz allgemein dem giftigem Getier (*animalia uenenata* 145rd und 145re).

5. Schlussbemerkungen

Teufel und Dämonen sind in den CC allgegenwärtig.¹⁸ Denn es ist das Anliegen Ulrichs, durch alle nur möglichen Beispiele den Leser der Texte und Betrachter der Bilder vor den Nachstellungen des Teufels zu warnen. Dies wurde nicht nur in den Predigten und anderen Formen der Unterweisung vermittelt, sondern geschah auch in der privaten Meditation. Dem Betrachter der Handschrift stellte sich das Bild des Teufels daher wie selbstverständlich in abschreckender Weise dar: Gezeigt wird er als gehörntes Wesen, mit fratzenartigen Gesichtszügen, grauschwarz oder feuerrot, manchmal mit zotteligem Fell bedeckt und mit Gesichtern auf Leib und Knien, manchmal mit fledermausartigen Flügeln ausgestattet, gelegentlich mit Hufen ins Bild gesetzt. Die Federzeichnungen sind durchweg nicht von besonderer Qualität, sondern in einfacher Weise ausgeführt, weil sie sich auf die Kernaussage des Textes beschränken

¹⁸ Gelegentlich wird auch die Anbetung von Götzenbildern ins Bild gesetzt und in den Begleittexten entsprechend negativ ausgelegt; vgl. etwa fol. 38v, 44v, 71v, 141v, 222v.

wollen:¹⁹ „Dargestellt wurde nur, was für das Identifizieren des Bildinhaltes unerlässlich war.“²⁰

Begrifflich werden Teufel und Dämonen nicht klar unterschieden, vielmehr sind die Bezeichnungen variabel und austauschbar. Dämonen sind ‚böse Geister‘ (*spiritus maligni*), bewohnen wie der Teufel gemeinsam mit ihm das *infernum* und haben ununterscheidbar Eigenschaften, welche das Heil des Menschen bedrohen: Beim Jüngsten Gericht werden die Dämonen als Diener des Herrn die Bösen in die Hölle stürzen, und ‚die Dämonen werden ihre Henkersknechte sein in der Strafe, wie sie ihre Einpeitscher waren in der Schuld‘ (*demones erunt eorum tortores in pena, sicut fuerunt incentores in culpa* 234ra). Sie sind Feinde Christi (19ra) und (als *maligni spiritus*) Feinde Israels (213rb), Höllentiere (*animalia infernalialia, id est demones* 39rb) oder Höllenhunde (*canes infernales* 55rd), stellen wie Jäger den Kindern der Kirche nach (*ecclesie filijs insidiantes venatores* 43re). Böse Geister sind wie Kriechtiere, die mit ihrem Gift zu töten vermögen (29rd, vgl. 124rd: giftige Höllenschlangen; 200re). Christus ‚verschlingt die höllischen Schlangen, d.h. er beraubt die Dämonen und ihre Gefolgsleute ihrer Macht‘ (*...serpentes gehennales, scilicet demones et eorum sequaces* 37re). Wie aus einer Löwengrube (*de leonum, scilicet demonum lacu*) muss man sich durch Gottesfurcht vom Einfluss der Dämonen befreien (148rb). Anfechtungen der bösen Geister gleichen einem Kampf gegen Pygmäen (67re). Wie Raubvögeln kann der Mensch bösen Geistern zum Opfer fallen, wenn er nicht wachsam ist (5re). Wie höllischen Habichten (*accipitribus iehennalibus, id est demonibus*) drohen umherirrende Seelen den Dämonen zum Opfer zu fallen (116rd). Gleichsam reißenden Bussarden (*alicibus, id est demonibus infernalibus*) sind die Gläubigen ausgesetzt, wenn sie den Schutz der ‚Flügel der heiligen Mutter Kirche‘ halsstarrig und verstockt aufgeben, d.h. sich durch Sünden der Kirche entfremden (231rd). Dämonisiert werden auch Stämme des Orients, welche Israel bedrohen (27rc), und Wahrsager, welche die Werke des Teufels betreiben (124rb).

Wie ein Lorbeerzweig seinen Träger vor Blitzschlag schützt, so bietet das Kreuz, ‚vor der Anfechtung und Verführung durch die bösen Geister‘

¹⁹ Zur Ausführung der Illustrationen vgl. meine Einführung zu unserer Edition (wie Anm. 2), Bd. 1, S. XXXIf.

²⁰ Hedwig Munscheck, *Die „Concordantie caritatis“ des Ulrich von Lilienfeld. Untersuchungen zu Inhalt, Quellen und Verbreitung, mit einer Paraphrasierung von Temporale, Sanktorale und Commune*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 28 Kunstgeschichte, Bd. 352 (Frankfurt am Main u.a., 2000), S. 149.

(*maligni spiritus*) Schutz. Ulrich mahnt: ‚Damit du also durch den Blitzschlag der tobenden Dämonen nicht zugrunde gehst (*Vt ergo a demonum furenti fulgure non intereas*), trage einen Lorbeerzweig, d.h. das unverwelkte Zeichen des heiligen Kreuzes, bei dir‘ (180rd).

Teufel und Dämonen sind zunächst Thema der Sonn- und Festtags-evangelien im ersten Hauptteil *De tempore* sowie im zweiten Teil *De sanctis* zu den Heiligenfesten: Sie begegnen in den Evangelien von den drei Versuchungen Christi, in den Berichten von der Heilung Besessener, von Jesu ‚Höllenfahrt‘ oder vom Sieg Georgs über den Drachen. Eine herausragende Rolle aber nehmen Teufel und Dämonen in den Auslegungen der Texte aus dem Alten Testament und aus den naturkundlichen Berichten ein, die in typologischer Funktion christologisch gedeutet werden. Gerade durch die – in diesem Text-Bild-Zyklus erstmals systematisch geleistete – Einbeziehung der naturkundlichen Überlieferung fällt es Ulrich leicht, scheinbar mühelos immer neue Aspekte der Bedrohung des Menschen durch die Mächte des Bösen mahnend in Erinnerung zu rufen. Zugleich wird aber auch immer deutlich, dass der wachsame Mensch die Heilszusage Christi hat: Die Leser, Betrachter und Zuhörer erfahren, dass die *Concordantiae Caritatis*, die in der Geschichte wirksamen Heilszusagen des die Menschen liebenden Gottes, die Macht des Bösen zu brechen vermögen.

BOUNDARIES OF THE FAIRY REALM IN SCOTLAND

Julian Goodare

Thair come ane cumpanye of rydaris by, that maid sic ane dynn as heavin
and erd had gane togidder; and incontinent, thai raid in to the loch, with
mony hiddous rumbill. Bot Thom tauld, It was the gude wichtis that wer
rydand in Middil-zerd.¹

What was the place of fairies in the popular mentality of early modern Scotland? We know that the common folk believed in fairies; the sources for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are in some ways the clearest we have on the subject. They show us fairies as real beings active in ‘middle-earth’, not just as characters in stories. They tell us much about what fairies were believed to do, and how humans and fairies were believed to interact. Fairies, however, inhabited only one part of the early modern cosmos, which was also populated by a variety of other non-human beings—angels, demons, and ghosts, to mention only a few. How distinct were fairies? Some people described fairies that were rather like angels, demons, or ghosts. Bessie Dunlop in 1576, quoted above, used the phrase ‘gude wichtis’, by which she may have meant fairies, but these ‘wichtis’ were behaving rather like the Wild Hunt, usually understood as ghosts. What was the nature of the boundaries of the fairy realm?

This paper will concentrate on folk beliefs. Elite beliefs, being a topic in their own right, are largely left on one side. Folk beliefs, however, are to be sought in elite sources, the study of which entails some consideration of elite beliefs for methodological reasons. Members of the elite, who did not usually believe in fairies, sometimes assumed that the beings under consideration were angels, demons, or ghosts, in which they did believe. Their recording of evidence from popular culture was indirect and even inadvertent, and as a result, the boundaries of the fairy realm were partially obscured. With careful analysis, it should be possible to reconstruct some of these boundaries, and to place fairies more precisely in the early modern cosmos. But one of the arguments of this paper will be that the boundaries of the fairy realm were, in important respects, indeterminate.

* * *

¹ Robert Pitcairn, ed., *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland, 1488–1624*, 3 vols. (Bannatyne Club, 1833), 1:55–57.

The outlines of early modern Scottish fairy belief have become clearer through the pioneering work of Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan.² Fairies were nature spirits who lived in hills and other remote places, usually grouped in a court with a fairy king and queen. There were stories and ballads about fairies, but fairies were not just beings in stories; they were really believed to visit humans, and some humans believed that they themselves had visited the fairies (often being carried off by them). Evidence from stories and ballads will occasionally be used in what follows, but in principle I am not concerned with stories as such; I am concerned with beings that were believed to be real by the humans who encountered them. Such encounters were often fateful, for fairies wielded magical power, not always for good—their morality was ambivalent from a human point of view.

The reality of fairies and other beings has also featured strongly in the work of Emma Wilby. She has analysed a pattern of encounters between humans and other beings—principally fairies in Scotland and animal familiars in England—as manifesting a visionary quality. For instance, Bessie Dunlop's experience of the 'gude wichtis' was, to her, immediate and real. She encountered a spirit-guide, Thom Reid, with whom she conversed and argued, and who gave her advice and equipment to enable her to become a magical practitioner. Wilby has used anthropological studies of trances and shamanistic practices to shed light on the lived nature of such experiences.³ In the present paper I shall apply some of these insights to the historical evidence from early modern Scotland.

This recent work has indicated that fairies had a clearly-defined and positive identity. When you encountered a fairy, you might not be sure whether it would help you or harm you, but you did know that it was a fairy. Did you, though? Fairies were not the only uncanny beings in the early modern Scottish cosmos. As Sir Walter Scott observed, fairies were 'best described by negatives, being neither angels, devils, nor the souls of deceased men'.⁴ Or, as a recent folklorist has put it, fairies are 'liminal beings', between heaven and hell, between the living and the dead, and

² Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief: A History* (East Linton, 2001). This excellent book is the first to provide a clear account of beliefs between about 1450 and about 1750. What follows will sometimes criticise Henderson and Cowan, but my general aim is to build on their firm foundations.

³ Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Brighton, 2005).

⁴ Walter Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830; London, 1884), p. 121.

between purity and danger.⁵ Fairies need to be understood in their own right, but also in this broader context of other beings.

There is, therefore, a need to explore the boundaries of the fairy realm. Previous studies have sometimes suggested that fairies were rather like some other types of uncanny being, and that there were conceptual regions containing beings that could not be securely categorised as fairy or as non-fairy. However, most fairy scholars, including Henderson and Cowan, have naturally been concerned mainly with the heartland of the fairy realm. They have looked for 'fairies', they have found them, and they have written about them. The present paper could not have been written without this valuable work, but it will use it as a starting-point for a quest. In this quest, we shall venture beyond the heartland in which a fairy was definitely a fairy. We shall search for overlap, for fuzzy definitions, for fairies that were rather like something else.

Rather like what, though? Here, overlap between fairies and angels, demons, or ghosts is of particular interest. Our quest will also require us to investigate whether there was overlap between fairies and saints, or fairies and witches. Fairies were folkloric beings, and some other such beings, familiar and unfamiliar, will also be considered. It has been generally agreed that elves were fairies under another name, and thus require little separate investigation; but what about brownies and trows? What about the gyre-carline or the urisk? Fairies can be tricky characters, and we shall need our wits about us.

'Overlap' between fairies and other beings could occur in more than one way. Hypothetically, there could be beings with a dual nature: fully fairies, say, but also fully ghosts. Or hybrids: partly fairies, partly ghosts (perhaps even the offspring of intercourse between the two). Or beings that were clearly of one type but were associated with another, or behaved in ways usually ascribed to another: ghosts in fairyland, say. Or indeterminate beings: those humans who encountered them were themselves unsure what they were. These examples are all hypothetical at this stage, but we may find that some of them turn out to be real. The quest that follows can be considered to be an exercise in fairy taxonomy and fairy ontology.

These issues are approached in a deliberately restricted and consciously historical way. Full reliance is placed only upon evidence that can be securely dated to before about 1750. More recent folk beliefs are a subject in their own right. We cannot assume that the folk beliefs of the

⁵ Peter Narváez, ed., *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays* (Lexington, Ken., 1991), p. ix.

nineteenth century had necessarily been transmitted unchanged from the seventeenth century. The terminal date of 1750 has been chosen as antedating the Romantic movement, which might itself have influenced the folk beliefs in which it was interested and on which it drew.⁶ It happens that the single most useful type of evidence, the records of witchcraft trials, occurs from the late sixteenth century until the early eighteenth.

A historical approach also entails the unfortunate exclusion of a good deal of literary evidence. Literary depictions of fairies are, again, a subject in their own right. My subject here is fairies and other beings that were believed to be real by the common people. We cannot turn to (say) William Dunbar and expect him to provide us with a faithful account of such beings; poets are not ethnographers. Dunbar could have described beings that he knew from sources other than folk belief, or beings that the common folk believed to be fictional. It would be desirable in future to have a broader study relating such beings to those in this paper. Now, though, let us set out in search of some of the beings that the common folk believed to be real.

* * *

The first beings to compare with fairies are saints. Both had uncanny powers. Most of our fairy material is post-Reformation, when saints were officially frowned on, but the resulting separation in the records between official and folk belief makes it easier to distinguish the latter. Records of trials for witchcraft, and of church prosecutions for charming, yield a moderate quantity of material on saints. Charmers (magical practitioners) frequently invoked God, either individually or as the three named persons of the Trinity; there are some mentions of specific saints, but far fewer. The scattered examples we have, however, are enough to indicate widespread belief; the following are representative. Andrew Man from Rathven, whom we shall meet again, invoked St John among others in 1597.⁷ William Kerow, a charmer in Elgin in 1623, invoked St John, St Peter, all the saints of heaven, and Christ.⁸ People in Kinlochewe were pouring milk

⁶ Of course there were literary influences on earlier folk culture: Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford, 2000). But the influence was more likely to run in the direction of Protestant evangelisation, and *against* the kind of folk belief that would typically be called 'superstition'.

⁷ *Miscellany of the Spalding Club*, 1 (Aberdeen, 1841), p. 120.

⁸ William Cramond, ed., *Records of Elgin, 1234–1800*, 2 vols. (Aberdeen, 1903–08), 2:182.

as 'oblaciones' to St Mourie in 1656.⁹ A typical highlander, we are told in the 1680s, 'swaereth by the Tutelar saint of the Countrey'.¹⁰ One question that future research might address is: did Scottish magical practitioners confine themselves to biblical saints after the Reformation, as their English counterparts did, or did they invoke a wider range, as in France?¹¹

The principal question for us, though, is: Did people encounter beings that might have been saints but might also have been fairies? The answer seems to be no. Saints were mainly prayed to in heaven.¹² Encounters with them came in the form of dream-visions, such as a vision of St Margaret experienced by Sir John Wemyss and reported by Walter Bower in the fifteenth century.¹³ Fairy encounters did not take place in dreams that were known to be such, but in some other trance-like state; and fairies were rarely prayed to. There were occasional prayer-like appeals to fairies, as we shall see, but I have found none that resemble or mention appeals to saints.

Because saints were thought to be with God in heaven, the relationship between fairies and saints can be explored indirectly through the relationship between fairies and God. There is some evidence of fairies being seen as opposed to God. St Margaret,¹⁴ in the thirteenth century, remedied misfortunes inflicted by fairies. Janet Anderson, in Stirling in 1621, invoked Christian beings against fairies. One of her charms was: 'Earthles king and earthles queen, God let the[e] nevir gait rest in kirk nor christiane beireis quhill thay restore this woman Jonet Wilson to hir heall againe, in name of the Father, the Sone, and the Holy Ghost'.¹⁵ Janet Cock, in Dalkeith in 1661, told someone who was ill to stop praying; if he did, he would soon

⁹ Donald A. Mackenzie, *Scottish Folk-Lore and Folk-Life* (London, 1935), p. 219. Dr Steve Boardman has kindly suggested to me that this may have been St Maelrubha. See also the Survey of Dedications to Saints in Medieval Scotland (<http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/Research/saints/>, accessed 22 April 2010).

¹⁰ Michael Hunter, ed., *The Occult Laboratory: Magic, Science and Second Sight in Late Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Woodbridge, 2001), p. 72.

¹¹ Owen Davies, 'French Charmers and their Healing Charms', in *Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. Jonathan Roper (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 91–112, at p. 108.

¹² Audrey-Beth Fitch, *The Search for Salvation: Lay Faith in Scotland, 1480–1560* (Edinburgh, 2009), pp. 41–45, 91.

¹³ Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 9 vols., ed. D. E. R. Watt (Aberdeen, 1987–98), 5:337–39. I am grateful to Dr Steve Boardman for this reference and for a discussion of the subject.

¹⁴ Robert Bartlett, ed., *The Miracles of Saint Æbbe of Coldingham and Saint Margaret of Scotland* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 1–liv, 82–85, 120–23.

¹⁵ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, 2nd ser., 14 vols., 8:347.

recover.¹⁶ She may have been invoking the Devil, but it is more likely that she was appealing to the fairies. Either way, she saw intercession in an either-or framework: she was recommending a route to healing of which she thought God would disapprove.

* * *

As well as saints, heaven also contained angels. Robert Kirk thought that there were 'orders, and degrees of Angels', and that fairies were one such order, next to man, 'with bodies of air condensd and curiously shapt'.¹⁷ This derived from elite demonology rather than folk belief, however. What was the place of angels in Scottish popular belief?

Folk angels seem to have been rare. The only clear evidence that I have found comes from the Aberdeenshire witchcraft panic of 1597. This was an angel called Christsonday, mentioned by Andrew Man and Marion Grant. Man's evidence has long been recognised as spectacular; his cosmos was an elaborate one, though only a few details can be picked out here. He saw the world in a fairly orthodox Christian framework, with God as the lord of his creation. Christsonday, one of the most important beings in Man's cosmos, did not behave in an orthodox Christian way, but his explicit identity as an angel is sufficient for our purposes. Man's cosmos also included 'the elphis', especially the 'Quene of Elphen', and ghosts—the elves had 'sindrie deid men in thair cumpanie', including 'the kyng that deit in Flowdoun and Thomas Rymour'. Finally, returning to orthodox Christianity, Man had a role for the Devil. We may discount his accusers' belief that Christsonday was 'the Devill, thy maister'; but Man warned against crows, for they were 'witaryff beastis, and the Devill will cum in thair liknes'. He had 'mett and messurit dyvers peces of land, callit wardis, to the hynd knicht quhom thow confessis to be a spreit'. This ritual was connected to that of the goodman's croft, leaving a rig uncultivated for the Devil, though the ontological status of the 'hynd knicht' remains unclear.¹⁸

Andrew Man's cosmos may have been *sui generis*, but he probably did not invent Christsonday. Marion Grant, who was caught up in the same witchcraft panic, also mentioned him. Her beliefs probably did not derive

¹⁶ Anna L. Cordey, *Witch-Hunting in the Presbytery of Dalkeith, 1649 to 1662* (University of Edinburgh MSc thesis, 2003), p. 39.

¹⁷ Hunter, ed., *Occult Laboratory* (see above, n. 10), p. 96.

¹⁸ *Spalding Misc.*, vol. 1 (see above, n. 7), pp. 120–24. 'Witaryff' = cunning. I am grateful to Dr Emily Lyle for a discussion of the goodman's croft and the 'hynd knicht'.

directly from Man's; her trial was in April, some months before his, and she lived over thirty miles from him (she was from Methlick, he from Rathven, though he travelled around). Her dittay (indictment) stated:

Thow confessit that the Devill thy maister, quhome thow termes Christson-day, causit the[e] dans sindrie tymes with him and with Our Ladye, quha, as thow sayes, was a fine woman, cled in a quhyt walicot, and sindrie utheris of Christsondayes servands with the[e], quhais names thow knawis not.

Christsonday also came to her 'in the liknes of a blak staig', and 'in ane gryte man his lickness, in silkin abuiyeament, with ane quhyt candill in his hand'.¹⁹ There are no obvious fairy references here. If this had been Andrew Man, we might have thought that 'Our Ladye' was the queen of the fairies, but here, she seems more likely to be the Virgin Mary. Grant invoked the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and Christsonday. She learned from Christsonday a ritual to charm a sword so that the owner should not be harmed—an unlikely ritual for fairies, who usually avoided iron and swords. The silk clothes and white candle evoke the pre-Reformation church. Grant's evidence strengthens the case for seeing Christsonday as an angel and not as a fairy.²⁰

A popular cosmos did not have to include fairies or nature spirits. The Friulian miller Menocchio organised his ideas around angels. He gave these such importance that he even saw God as chief angel. He had thought about cannibals and dog-headed men, which he had encountered in his reading of Sir John Mandeville, but he gave them little importance. He mentioned spirits of fire in the air, but they seem to have been angels of some kind. Fairies, or other nature spirits, formed no part of his thinking.²¹ A Scottish witch who had some apparently similar ideas was Jean Brown, in Penninghame in 1706—but the Christian 'spirits' that mattered to her were beings that she had actually encountered. She described them as good spirits that she could not see, but could feel; she was married to them, and they lay with her 'carnally as men and women do'. They were the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and had shown her a vision of the Day

¹⁹ *Spalding Misc.*, vol. 1, pp. 171–72. 'Walicot' = petticoat; 'staig' = horse.

²⁰ A third reference to Christsonday in the Aberdeenshire trials occurred when it was said that Elspeth Reid's bairn 'suld be borne wpoun ane Chryistsonday, sa mony oulkis efter Martimes', evidently a date rather than a person: *Spalding Misc.*, vol. 1, p. 98.

²¹ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (London, 1980), pp. 44–49, 54–56, 105, and *passim*.

of Judgement. She denied that they were fairies.²² Brown's idiosyncratic cosmos resembles Menocchio's. Overall we should probably conclude that angels, like saints, largely remained in heaven, and that, unlike saints, they were not usually invoked or prayed to; hence their rarity in the lived experience of the people. Angels occasionally associated with fairies, but even when they did, they remained distinct from them.

* * *

If angels were rare in folk belief, demons were very common—at least in the witchcraft trial material, which provides the best evidence of lived experience. This also provides a great deal of evidence of overlap between demons and fairies, which *prima facie* indicates that the boundaries of the fairy realm were highly permeable in this direction. The evidence, however, cannot be taken at face value.

There were many cases in which fairies were reinterpreted as demonic by the interrogators of witches. This is now well established.²³ However, there has been interest in overlap between fairies and demons, which is often found in these sources. Wilby in particular argues for the similarity of fairyland and the witches' sabbath in witchcraft confessions: there are 'accounts in which elements of the stereotypical sabbath merge seamlessly with elements of the stereotypical visit to fairyland'.²⁴ The hypothesis is that some people believed that they had encountered fairies that were partly demons, or indistinguishable in some respects from demons.

Unfortunately, the sources are contaminated on this question, because the interrogators expected the suspects to have encountered demons or the Devil, and directed their questioning towards proving this. We do not usually know how much pressure was applied during the questioning of any given individual, but we know in general that torture was common. Torture does not necessarily invalidate the testimony, but it does make it more likely that the interrogated person would say what their interrogators wished or expected them to say. The fairy material in the confessions probably represents genuine belief, because the interrogators had no reason to ask for it; but we cannot place the same reliance on the

²² Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, Joyce Miller, and Louise Yeoman, 'The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft, 1563–1736' (www.shc.ed.ac.uk/witches/, archived Jan. 2003, updated Oct. 2003, accessed 1 March 2010; hereafter 'SSW').

²³ Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (see above, n. 2), ch. 4.

²⁴ Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits* (see above, n. 3), pp. 84–89 (quotation at p. 85).

demonic material. It is possible that some of the suspects really believed, before their arrest, that they had encountered a fairy that was rather like a demon; however, it is hard to see how such a case could be distinguished from those in which demons were introduced coercively through leading questions. It is true that fairyland and the witches' sabbath had certain similarities, so that one could be reinterpreted coercively as the other, but to say that they 'merge seamlessly' is to say more than the evidence will support.

There are, moreover, cases in which people drew clear distinctions between fairies and demons. One example is Marable Couper, in Orkney in 1624, whose dittay quoted her confession: 'ye said ye haid nothing to do with the devill; bot quhen ye lay in gissing of your sone Robie, your companie came and tuk you away, and that thay fette yow, and ye ar with thame ewerie mone anse'. In the margin was added: 'The pannell confest the going with the faire tuise'.²⁵ This, incidentally, is an example of the way in which people who encountered fairies did not necessarily say that they had encountered 'fairies'; they used euphemisms, in this case 'your companie'. Margaret Barclay, in Irvine in 1618, also distinguished between fairies and demons; she mentioned fairies but also considered consulting 'ane man, callit Cunyng, quhom she supponit had ane buik that could rais the devill'.²⁶ Some people were quite prepared to appeal to the Devil if necessary.

* * *

Ghosts, our next category of beings, should ontologically have been well defined. People knew that people were people, and that when someone died their soul left their body. Each person's soul was unique; there was no idea of reincarnation or transmigration. Yet some ghosts associated with fairies. Fairyland was thought of as the abode of a number of spirits of dead humans—particularly those who had died suddenly and prematurely. Henderson and Cowan have a valuable discussion of this.²⁷ Their discussion is particularly valuable where they preserve a clear distinction between ghosts and fairies, and there is one point at which they have difficulty doing this: the case of Bessie Dunlop and her spirit-guide Thom Reid.

²⁵ *Abbotsford Club Miscellany*, vol. 1 (1837), p. 139. 'Gissing' (jizzen) = childbed; 'panel' = accused person.

²⁶ *Trial, Confession, and Execution of Isobel Inch, John Stewart, Margaret Barclay & Isobel Crawford, for Witchcraft, at Irvine, anno 1618* (Ardrossan and Saltcoats, n.d. [1855]), p. 12.

²⁷ Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (see above, n. 2), pp. 46–47, 59–61.

Henderson and Cowan say of Reid²⁸ that he 'is somewhat of an enigma. Though he acted in most ways like a fairy, and certainly lived and associated with their kind, he was not, or at least was not always, a fairy'. This 'enigma' can readily be resolved. Reid, as Dunlop explained clearly, was the spirit of a man who had died at the battle of Pinkie. As such, he was a ghost: no more and no less. He was no more a fairy himself than was 'the kyng that deit in Flowdoun' (James IV), whom we have seen Andrew Man encountering among the fairies. Thom Reid, like James IV, associated with the fairies, but, as the duke of Wellington is said to have observed, being born in a stable does not make you a horse.

The same applies to two other important cases. Janet Boyman, in the Canongate in 1572, encountered 'the evill blast', with 'ane evill spreit or ane war thing neir hand by'. She had an extensive relationship with the fairies, but this 'blast' seems different.²⁹ Elspeth Reoch, in Orkney in 1616, had a spirit-guide who 'callit him selff ane farie man quha wes sumtyme her kinsman callit Johne Stewart quha wes slane be McKy at the doun going of the soone, and therfor nather deid nor leiving bot wald ever go betuix the heaven and the earth'.³⁰ Stewart was not said explicitly to have associated with fairies, but this is probably what the phrase 'farie man' meant. He was certainly the spirit of a formerly-living human being: a ghost.

The Wild Hunt, spirits of people who had died prematurely and were compelled to wander the earth, is found in its essentials in Scottish folk belief.³¹ These were ghosts, but again there was a fairy connection. John Stewart, in Irvine in 1618, said that 'all sic personnes quho war tane away by suddane death went with the Pharie'.³² Bessie Dunlop's confession, quoted at the head of this paper, also indicates a connection between fairies and the Wild Hunt. Another link between fairies and ghosts comes

²⁸ Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, p. 59. There is more on the case in Lizanne Henderson, 'Witch, Fairy and Folktale Narratives in the Trial of Bessie Dunlop', in Lizanne Henderson, ed., *Fantastical Imaginations: The Supernatural in Scottish History and Culture* (Edinburgh, 2009), pp. 141–66, but Reid's nature is not pursued: 'Just who exactly Thomas Reid was remains unclear' (p. 151). Wilby also discusses Reid extensively, firmly calling him a 'ghost': Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits* (see above, n. 3), p. 3.

²⁹ National Archives of Scotland (hereafter NAS), JC26/1/67; SSW (see above, n. 22).

³⁰ 'Acts and Statutes of the Lawting, Sheriff and Justice Courts within Orkney and Shetland, 1602–1644', *Maitland Miscellany* 2 (1840), 187–91.

³¹ Julian Goodare, 'Scottish Witchcraft in its European Context', in Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds., *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 26–50, at pp. 32–33.

³² *Trial, Confession, and Execution of Isobel Inch* (see above, n. 26), p. 9. This John Stewart was not the same as Elspeth Reoch's kinsman.

in Robert Kirk's report that highlanders believed that 'places called Fayrie hills' were places where 'the souls of their predecessors' dwelt.³³

Linked to ghosts, but also in a category of their own, were the death's messengers or wraiths, which interested Kirk in his efforts to distinguish them from fairies: 'what the Low-countrie-Scot calls a Wreath, and the Irish *éug*, or deaths Messenger'. The wraith sometimes appeared 'as a litle rough dog'.³⁴ It was connected in turn to beliefs about second sight. Second sight was mainly a propensity to see visions of approaching death, though the visions did not usually constitute a distinct class of beings.³⁵

Finally, legendary heroes are a distinct category of ghosts. John Carswell,³⁶ superintendent of Argyll, objected in 1567 to 'vain hurtful lying worldly tales composed about the Tuatha Dé Danann, and about the sons of Milesius, and about the heroes and Fionn mac Cumhaill with his warriors'. The sons of Milesius, the legendary founders of the Irish nation, were human enough (and real enough) for some chiefs to claim descent from them. Janet Boyman invoked the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, King Arthur, and Queen Elspeth; she also mentioned fairies, but King Arthur was certainly a legendary hero.³⁷ Probably James IV (mentioned by Andrew Man, as we have seen) also belongs in this category.

* * *

Let us now turn to nature spirits—a broad category that encompassed fairies and other beings that were more or less related, or at least distinct from beings originating with organised Christianity. Elves can be regarded as synonyms for fairies, so that no distinction between them arises. However, there were other beings which, while sharing a similar ontological status to fairies, were not synonymous with them and which seem to have

³³ Hunter, ed., *Occult Laboratory* (see above, n. 10), p. 85. Kirk himself thought that these were really fairies. There was also a link between *demons* and ghosts, for which see Joyce Miller, 'Men in Black: Appearances of the Devil in Early Modern Scottish Witchcraft Discourse', in Goodare, Martin, and Miller, *Witchcraft and Belief* (see above, n. 31), pp. 144–65, at p. 158.

³⁴ Hunter, ed., *Occult Laboratory* (see above, n. 10), p. 83. 'Wraithes' were also mentioned by James VI, *Daemonologie*, in his *Minor Prose Works*, ed. James Craigie (STS, 1982), p. 42.

³⁵ Michael Hunter, 'The Discovery of Second Sight in Late 17th-Century Scotland', *History Today* 51:6 (June, 2001), 48–53.

³⁶ R. L. Thomson, ed., *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh* (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 179. Henderson and Cowan call the Tuatha Dé Danann fairies: Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (see above, n. 2), pp. 112–13.

³⁷ SSW (see above, n. 22).

been regarded in popular belief as distinct. Brownies and trows are important here, and we may also consider giants and urisks.

Brownies, unlike fairies, seem to have been solitary, and often to have lived or associated with people. They are mentioned in literary sources from the early sixteenth century (Gavin Douglas being a leading example), but their nature is rarely made clear. James VI was more explicit about the folk belief in brownies: they helped with housework and made the house 'all the sonsier'. He distinguished them from fairies, or rather (since he himself was confident that all such spirits were demons), he thought that popular belief did so. The brownie 'appeared like a roughman', and James wrote of him already in the past tense, since he 'appeared in time of papistrie and blindness'.³⁸ Similarly, Martin Martin, in 1695, mentioned 'a spirit, by the country people called Brownie' that had formerly been common in the Scottish isles and north. He continued: 'There were spirits also that appeared in the shape of women, horses, swine, cats, and some like fiery balls, which would follow men in the fields'. Some of these spirits at least were connected with ghosts, since they 'used also to form sounds in the air', and 'one of them resembled the voice of a woman who had died some time before, and the song related to her state in the other world'.³⁹ It is unlikely that all these 'spirits' were ghosts, however, while if the 'country people' had thought that any of them were fairies, Martin would probably have mentioned this. There seems to have been a rough and ready distinction between brownies and fairies in popular belief, even though we can comprehend them both within the broader analytical category of nature spirits.

Trows, found in Orkney and Shetland, were to some extent fairies under another name, as Henderson and Cowan have shown.⁴⁰ Trows may have differed from fairies in some ways, however. In later folklore they seem to have been more often subterranean, and Alan Bruford interpreted them

³⁸ James VI, *Daemonologie* (see above, n. 34), pp. 39–40, 45.

³⁹ Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, ca. 1695*, intr. by Charles W. J. Withers (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 199. We should be cautious of such beliefs, described in the past tense. Martin also mentioned trial marriage for a year as something that had formerly occurred (p. 78)—and more recent research has shown it to be a myth: A. E. Anton, 'Handfasting in Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review* 37 (1958), 89–102. It is a little worrying that there are so few present-tense reports of brownies. For another past-tense report, see Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides, 1772*, ed. Andrew Simmons (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 312–13. Of course, fairies too were believed to be receding, but for them, the theme seems less prominent: Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (see above, n. 2), pp. 24–30.

⁴⁰ Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, p. 15.

as 'the keepers of the dead'.⁴¹ A taxonomy of trows emerges in the case of Katherine Craigie, tried in Orkney in 1640. She told Robert Robson 'that I prayed ill for you, and now I sie that prayer hath taken effect', but she agreed to help him and performed a ritual to find out 'whether it be a hill-spirit, a kirk-spirit, or a water-spirit, that troubles him' (she found it to be a kirk-spirit). Acquitted, she was brought to trial again in 1643; one charge was curing Thomas Irvine of a disease which she said was 'the sea trow or spirit that was lying upoun him'.⁴² This phrase shows that she saw trows as 'spirits'. Whether her taxonomy of hill, kirk, and water spirits was more widely shared is a fascinating question, if perhaps unanswerable from the present evidence. These do at least seem to have been nature spirits, rather than angels, demons, or ghosts.

There are various other beings that might be considered. In a brief overview like this one, there are bound to be omissions. Part of the problem is the patchy nature of early modern sources. If we consider material from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there is a good deal on dwarves, goblins, kelpies,⁴³ and selkies,⁴⁴ to name only a few. Some of these may well have been traditional beings that were also known in our period, but the historical sources say little about them.

As well as beings that were quasi-human, it might be worth considering magical animals. There were dragons; some witches in Alloa in 1659 confessed that they 'did sitt upon my Lord of Marr his coall workes lyk corbies and dragones and stopt the workes and drowned them'.⁴⁵ Sea creatures called 'shoupiltins' may also fall into this category. An account of the

⁴¹ Alan Bruford, 'Trolls, Hillfolk, Finns, and Picts: The Identity of the Good Neighbours in Orkney and Shetland', in Narváez, ed., *The Good People* (see above, n. 5), pp. 116–41, at p. 132.

⁴² *Abbotsford Club Miscellany*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1837), pp. 165, 173.

⁴³ The earliest citation for 'kelpie' in the online Dictionary of the Scottish Language (www.dsl.ac.uk) and the *OED* is '1747'. This refers to a poem by William Collins, actually dated 1749. Collins was from Sussex and does not seem to have visited Scotland. He was advised by Scottish friends, including the dramatist John Home to whom the poem was addressed, but it is far from clear where their material originated. I am not actually arguing that Collins and his friends invented kelpies; I am merely arguing that the possibility that they did so cannot at present be excluded, and that if anyone wants to prove that kelpies existed in popular belief before 1749, the burden of proof lies on them. Further study of Collins's informants might elucidate the matter; see Sandro Jung, 'William Collins' Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland (1749) Reconsidered', *Études Écos-saises* 9 (2003–04), 223–32.

⁴⁴ The search for the folkloric 'selkie' is complicated by the fact that this was the standard word for a seal in middle Scots. Selkies have also been known as 'finns', but the earliest example of this word in the Dictionary of the Scottish Language is as late as 1888.

⁴⁵ British Library, Egerton MS 2879, fol. 4v.

Shetlanders in 1711 said: 'Sometimes they catch with their Nets and Hooks Tritons, they call them Shoupiltins and Mermaids, but these are rare and but seldom seen'.⁴⁶ Today we think of mermaids as quasi-human, but this evidence seems to indicate a category of monstrous or deformed creatures that were not obviously human. Some sources make clear that there was belief in spirits of some kind, but it is not clear in what: Martin's 'spirits . . . in the shape of women, horses, swine, cats, and some like fiery balls' have already been quoted.

There seems to be enough mention of giants for these to be accepted as folkloric beings in our period.⁴⁷ Sir Robert Sibbald noted that highlanders believed prehistoric hillforts to be 'Habitations of Giants'.⁴⁸ One specific being that should be mentioned here is the gyre-carline—etymologically, an old woman giant. Sir David Lindsay told the young King James V stories 'off the reid Etin, and the gyir carlyng'.⁴⁹ Evidently these stories were folk tales.⁵⁰ Lindsay's evidence on the gyre-carline is thus qualitatively different from that of most poems: it has a link with folk belief that they lack. As with ballads, there is a danger, of course, that these stories were told consciously as fictions—not just by Lindsay, but also by the common folk with whom he shared the story. Another word for a giant was an 'etin'; Lindsay's tale of the Red Etin was presumably the same as the 'taiyl of the reide eyttyn vitht the thre heydis' mentioned by the *Complaynt of Scotland*.⁵¹ We tend to think of giants as solidly physical, but perhaps they were in fact 'spirits' in the sense that fairies were.

Finally, one interesting being is the urisk, later described as half human and half goat. In 1691, Kirk mentioned 'hubrísgeadh', which, it has been suggested, means 'ùruisg' (urisk).⁵² If it does, it indicates that the urisk was a distinct being in the folk belief of our period. This is the only mention of the urisk that I have found before 1806, the year in which Patrick Graham mentioned urisks as 'a sort of lubberly supernaturals . . . like the Brownies

⁴⁶ [Robert Monteith,] *The Description of the Isles of Orkney and Zetland* (Edinburgh, 1711), p. 9.

⁴⁷ Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (see above, n. 2), pp. 22–23, 136.

⁴⁸ Hunter, ed., *Occult Laboratory* (see above, n. 10), p. 62.

⁴⁹ Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, *Works*, ed. Douglas Hamer, 4 vols., (Edinburgh, 1931–34), 1:5. In his 'Satyre' he later associated the gyre-carline with the prophecies of Merlin: *ibid.*, 2:401. Cf. Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (see above, n. 2), p. 136.

⁵⁰ For examples of interactions between elite and popular culture, see Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed. (Farnham, 2009), pp. 51–56, 97–99, and Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture* (see above, n. 6).

⁵¹ *The Complaynt of Scotland*, ed. A. M. Stewart (Edinburgh, 1979), p. 50.

⁵² Hunter, ed., *Occult Laboratory* (see above, n. 10), p. 78.

of England'. He said nothing about their being half human and half goat, but he thought that they had regular meetings in a cave known as *Coirre nan Uriskin*.⁵³ By this time, of course, we are into the Romantic period; this sort of material, neither fully ethnographic nor indirectly revelatory of popular beliefs not shared by the writer, is unfortunately difficult to use as evidence of popular belief.

* * *

Fairies, angels, demons, and ghosts could all be described as 'spirits'. What the common folk may have believed in was a world of 'spirits' considered as a single taxonomic category. Nature spirits may often have been a distinct subcategory within this broader one, in the sense that people perceived closer links between (say) fairies and brownies than between fairies and other types of spirit such as angels; but there were times when people seem to have been thinking more generally about 'spirits' in a way that might in principle embrace any or all of these beings. Kirk wrote that highlanders believed that 'all uncouth unknown wights' were terrified of cold iron; this sounds like a general category of nature spirits.⁵⁴ This can be illustrated from occasions in which people encountered 'spirits' that were not assigned to any narrower category such as 'fairy'.

There are numerous instances of human encounters with ambiguous beings. In these, the human was genuinely unsure how to classify the beings concerned, or reluctant to do so. The sources here are often difficult; many of them come from witchcraft interrogations in which the interrogators had different ideas from the suspect. Henderson and Cowan have familiarised us with the pattern in which the suspect talked about a fairy which the interrogators construed and recorded as the Devil. The cases that follow do not fit this pattern. Instead, the suspect talked about an ambiguous being, *not* clearly a fairy, which the interrogators construed and recorded as the Devil.

Janet Kennedy, one of the North Berwick witches of 1590–91, confessed that 'about thirty years or thereby, about the [...] in the day there came till her house a man like an old palmer clad in white, who after divers speeches had with her showed forth a book he had in his hand and caused her to swear upon that that she should take her to the judgement of God and forsake the foul thief and all his works, to keep her from temptation'.

⁵³ Patrick Graham, *Sketches Descriptive of Picturesque Scenery on the Southern Confines of Perthshire* (Edinburgh, 1806), p. 19. This is the *OED*'s earliest citation for 'urisk'.

⁵⁴ Hunter, ed., *Occult Laboratory* (see above, n. 10), p. 81.

The interrogators, with their demonic assumptions, soon had Kennedy confessing 'that now she perceives it was an evil spirit appeared unto her in that likeness'.⁵⁵ We, however, can perhaps see that the 'man like an old palmer clad in white' was an ambiguous being. Kennedy was a visionary who experienced flight in spirit, and the white-clad man may have been a spirit-guide like that of Bessie Dunlop.

A similar spirit-guide associated himself with Janet Rendall alias Rigga, tried in Orkney in 1629. This was 'Walliman, claid in quhyt cloathis with ane quhyt head and ane gray beard', with whom Rendall had had a relationship for more than twenty years. She was a magical practitioner, who confessed that 'thair is nather man nor beast sick that is not tane away be the hand of God bot for almis ye ar able to cur it be praying to your Walliman'. Walliman would, however, be angry with those who refused her alms. Rendall seems to have bargained with him, for on one occasion he was said to have 'keipit promeis' in harming someone who had refused her a lodging.⁵⁶ Like Kennedy's palmer, Walliman was described without obvious fairy characteristics. Rendall explicitly *prayed* to him, although people hardly ever prayed to fairies. Perhaps he was a saint of some kind, but there are no definite indications of this, and Walliman remains an ambiguous being.

Another visionary with an unusual spirit-guide was Katherine Johnsdochter, tried in Shetland in 1616. She was accused of

keiping companie and societie with the devill quhom she callit the bowman of Hildiswick and Eschenes, quha come to hir quhen she wes in hir motheris hous, being ane young lass, at quhilk tyme he lay with hir, mair nor 40 yeiris syne and yeirlye and ilk yeir sensyne and speciallie at Hallowevin and Holy Crosday, and that the last time he lay with hir he gave hir ane marke on the privie memberis and left with hir ane sey nutte [i.e. tropical nut borne by sea] and ane cleik [i.e. large iron hook] quhairby she sould be hable to do only thing she desyrit and that the cleik is guid gif the kyne want the proffeit of thair milk to milk thame throw the ring of the cleik and that the nutte being kept upoun ane is guid to keip thame frome danger.

⁵⁵ Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches* (Exeter, 2000), p. 184; NAS, JC26/2/10. Normand and Roberts read '[?pal]mer'; the MS is certainly damaged, but I am confident that their suggestion is correct.

⁵⁶ G. F. Black and Northcote W. Thomas, eds., *Examples of Printed Folklore Concerning the Orkney & Shetland Islands*, Folk-Lore Society: County Folk-Lore, 3, Printed Extracts, no. 5 (London, 1903), pp. 107–09.

She had used the nut and cleik to cure her husband of a 'franacie' by transferring the disease to John Annand, merchant of Crail, who died accusing her of witchcraft. She also confessed to 'hanting and seing the trowis ryse out of the kirkyeard of Hildiswick and Holiecross Kirk of Eschenes and that she saw thame on the hill callit Greinfaill at monie sindrie tymes and that thay come to ony hous quhair thair wes feasting or great mirrines, and specialle at Yule'.⁵⁷

Johnsdochter was thus a magical practitioner, and used her relationship with the 'bowman' (the word in everyday Shetland usage meant a tenant) to gain special knowledge and special equipment. Some of the details of her confession evidently derive from hostile questioning, in particular the witch's mark, and the identification of the bowman as the Devil. Johnsdochter's forty-year relationship with the bowman sits oddly with the statement that he had given her the magical nut and cleik only last year, and she may have woven two separate ideas into a single story. Her sexual relationship with the bowman may thus have been modified or even invented. Perhaps she had retrospectively reshaped a trauma of her youth (perhaps a failed courtship or even a rape) into a more positive fantasy of magical power, and was then forced to reshape it again under interrogation.⁵⁸ She also had a relationship with the 'trowis', who were effectively fairies, but although they came from the same places as the bowman, he does not seem to have been one of them. Nor was there any direct suggestion that he was a ghost. His ontological status remains obscure to us, and perhaps it was obscure to Johnsdochter herself.

The folk healer Stephen Maltman, in Leckie in 1628, knew about fairies, but also about other distinct spirit beings. When asked 'how he had learned the prattickes quhilk he vsed', he confessed that 'he had thame of the fairye folk quhom he had sein in bodilie schapes in sindrie places'. However, Maltman carried out a healing ritual in which he 'prayed to god and to all vnearthliche creatures to send the bairne his health againe', and he advised another client to 'pray to god & all wneardlie wights'. He made no mention of specific, named beings other than the Trinity and fairies, but since he often spoke freely about fairies by name, his phrase 'all vnearthliche creatures' or 'all wneardlie wights' surely indicates that he meant something slightly different. In some of his healing rituals, as

⁵⁷ *Court Book of Shetland, 1615–1629*, ed. Gordon Donaldson (Lerwick, 1991), pp. 38–39.

⁵⁸ Cf. Diane Purkiss, 'Sounds of Silence: Fairies and Incest in Scottish Witchcraft Stories', in *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Stuart Clark, (London, 2001), pp. 81–98.

well as praying to God and the 'wneardlie wights', he also used a drawn sword to ward off the fairies. He evidently thought that there were other spirit-beings that were distinct from fairies.⁵⁹ What he thought these beings were, we can only speculate.

Shadowy distinctions between different beings also emerge in the confession of Janet Morrison, in Bute in 1662:

Item declares the devill told her that it was the fayries that took John Glas child's lyfe, and that the Spirit which spok to her told her the same that they were minded to tak his lyfe as they did. Item declares that at the time she met with the devil quhen he was going by with a great number of men that she asked at him quhat were these that went by who answered they are my company and quhen she speired where they were going he answered that they were going to seek a prey.⁶⁰

Here we have the Devil and fairies clearly identified, but also a 'Spirit' whose nature is left undefined. It seems unlikely that the spirit was a fairy, since fairies had only just been mentioned. The Devil's company were described as 'men', so presumably these were not fairies; but they could have been ghosts, who were former men. They sound like the Wild Hunt (discussed above), usually thought of as ghosts.

An ambiguous spirit, again described as a 'man', also appears in the testimony of Elspeth Reid, 'concubein' of the accused witch Thomas Leys (Aberdeen, 1597). He told her that he knew a hill at which he could 'gar ane man ryse and plene appeir to hir, in ony likenes scho plesit', whereupon she should 'becum that manis servand' and he would ensure that she should 'newir want'. Reid, however, refused, 'fering that it was ane ewill spreit'. Reid's relationship with the spirit was more extensive than she admitted here, since she was also overheard talking to Leys in prison about it. The couple had apparently visited the hill, and Reid had put her foot on Leys's foot to enable her to see the spirit; but when she inadvertently said 'God saiff me', then 'that ewill spreit vaniest away withe ane rwmleng'. The spirit sounds like a fairy in that it lived in a hill, but it also sounds like the Devil in the way that the pact with it was envisaged.⁶¹ The word 'fairy' was not mentioned.

An ambiguous spirit that was rather like a giant was reported by two neighbours of Major Weir, the reputed witch executed for incest in 1670.

⁵⁹ Alaric Hall, 'Folk-Healing, Fairies and Witchcraft: The Trial of Stein Maltman, Stirling 1628', *Studia Celtica Fennica* 3 (2006), 10–25, especially pp. 15, 18, 21–23.

⁶⁰ *Highland Papers*, ed. J. R. N. Macphail, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1914–34), 3:23.

⁶¹ *Spalding Misc.*, vol. 1 (see above, n. 7), pp. 98, 100.

They saw outside his house 'a woman above the length [i.e. height] of two ordinary females'. They also described it as a 'spectre' and a 'giantess', and were clearly reluctant to classify it.⁶² This case is unusual in being reported by neighbours. It provides further support for the idea of giants as spirits.

A group of explicitly ambiguous spirits was encountered by the Highland vagrant Donald McIlmichael in 1676. On a night-time November journey, he saw a light in a hill, and inside the hill were a 'great number of men and women'. He entered and promised to return, which he often did. Asked 'what he judged them to be', he answered 'that he cannot weill tell quhat persons they wer bot he judges them not to have bein *wordlie* men or men ordayne of god', adding that they had asked him if he was baptised.⁶³ These 'persons' were more like fairies than anything else, but McIlmichael's omission of any definite statement about their identity, and his explicit uncertainty on the subject, should be noted.⁶⁴ He was no doubt trying to avoid incriminating statements, but we cannot simply assume that he was withholding knowledge that the 'persons' were fairies. What he *had* said was quite incriminating (it did in fact get him executed), and by avoiding a mention of fairies he had in some ways made it easier for the interrogators to think that the 'persons' were witches or demons.

Andrew Man carried out a ritual to create a special piece of land to preserve livestock from diseases, dedicating it to 'the hynd knicht quhom thow confessis to be a spreit'.⁶⁵ The interrogators would no doubt have liked Man to confess that this was the Devil, so the survival of the vaguer phrase 'a spreit' must be due to his insistence that this is what the 'hynd knicht' was.

Agnes Sampson, one of the North Berwick witches of 1590–91, confessed that she made a pact with a spirit 'before she knew what spirit it was'.⁶⁶ This may be a retrospectively-constructed narrative, with the interrogators shaping it to lead up to an admission that she later learned that the spirit was the Devil. But it is still interesting that she claimed encountering an *unknown* spirit; the interrogators' purposes would have

⁶² Quoted in Christina Larner, Christopher H. Lee and Hugh V. McLachlan, *A Source-Book of Scottish Witchcraft* (Glasgow, 1977), p. 265.

⁶³ *Highland Papers* (see above, n. 60), 3:87. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁴ Lizanne Henderson calls them 'fairies', but this may be too simple: Lizanne Henderson, 'Witch Hunting and Witch Belief in the *Gàidhealtachd*', in Goodare, Martin, and Miller, *Witchcraft and Belief* (see above, n. 31), pp. 95–118, at p. 107.

⁶⁵ *Spalding Misc.*, vol. 1 (see above, n. 7), p. 120.

⁶⁶ Normand and Roberts, eds., *Witchcraft* (see above, n. 55), p. 139.

been equally well served by a statement that she had initially thought it to be a good spirit or a fairy. The idea that you might meet a spirit, and not know what spirit it was, must have been plausible.

Some people, when they had the option of naming the fairies (or other beings), deliberately declined it. There were two possible reasons to do this. One was prudent euphemism: calling the fairies 'the good neighbours' might avoid offending them. The second, and here more interesting, was a matter of keeping options open. It might have been fairies, but it might have been some other beings. Margaret Dickson, in Haddington in 1643, advised John Sharp to carry out a ritual to heal his daughter, 'if this be done be evill wights'; they were to be told to 'gang in the Divells name and give me my daughter againe'. She also 'bad him keep quyet', indicating that she knew that the authorities would disapprove.⁶⁷ This may be a case of a changeling, in which case the 'evill wights' may have been fairies, but the phrase does not look like prudent euphemism, and Dickson seems to have been unsure about the nature of the 'wights'.

Many of the unknown if undefined 'spirits' seem to have been nature spirits, but not all. The word could certainly be used of ghosts and demons. One undefined 'spirit' which may or may not have been a demon, but which certainly associated with the Devil, was found in a magical belt that Janet Spaldarg (mentioned in Aberdeenshire, 1597) supplied to Elspeth Forbes, lady of Boig: 'thair was ane spirit in that belt that spak, and thame quha ever wald put it about thame the Dewill suld haw thame'.⁶⁸

* * *

Much of what we know about fairies comes from witchcraft trials. Numerous witches, in their confessions, described contacts with fairies. There was a distinction between the two, of course: witches were human, whereas fairies were not. How clear was this distinction? A remarkable pioneering paper by J. A. MacCulloch adumbrated the idea of 'mingling' of beliefs about fairies and beliefs about witches. MacCulloch gave a list of 'parallel attributes and actions' assigned to fairies and to witches, and his arguments have been largely endorsed by Henderson and Cowan in a brief and regrettably unguarded passage. Adapting MacCulloch's list, they produce something over a dozen 'motifs in common' between fairies

⁶⁷ NAS, Haddington presbytery records, 1640–47, CH2/185, p. 181. Cf. Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (see above, n. 2), p. 97.

⁶⁸ *Spalding Misc.*, vol. 1 (see above, n. 7), p. 188.

and witches.⁶⁹ But if we examine these motifs more closely, breaking down the list into categories, a rather different picture emerges.

In considering a possible overlap between the category of 'fairy' and the category of 'witch', the motifs that stand out as common to both are those concerned with malefice. Witches were always maleficent, and fairies often were. The malefices of fairies, according to Henderson and Cowan, were 'turning milk or butter bad' and 'paralysis, problems in child-birth, or sudden death'.⁷⁰ A detailed study of malefices attributed to fairies would be a useful addition to knowledge; my own impression is that they may have been feared more for their interference with cattle, particularly with their milk-producing capacity. By contrast, we know more about malefices attributed to witches. It is true that witches have been studied at greater length, but there does seem to be more evidence for witches' malefice than for fairies' malefice. Witches' malefice covered a much wider field: human and animal illness and death, business failure, and misfortune of almost any kind. Moreover, when early modern Scots were faced with a particular instance of misfortune, there is no evidence that they asked themselves, 'Was this done by a fairy or by a witch?' This conclusion could conceivably be an artefact of the surviving evidence; this mostly comes from trials of witches, perhaps because it was harder to prosecute fairies. But we have learned a lot about fairies from witchcraft trial records, so if we have not learned that fairies and witches committed indistinguishable malefices, the most reasonable conclusion is that this is because they did not.

One category of Henderson and Cowan's 'motifs in common' consists in fact of things that fairies did, but that witches did not normally do. Fairies abducted children, leaving a changeling in place of the human child; witches simply caused children to sicken or die. Fairies were associated with hills, wells, and hawthorn trees. Witches sometimes met on hills, but they did not live in them, and they also met in many other places. Fairy wells were used by charmers, and some charmers were accused of witchcraft, but that does not mean that there were witch wells. Fairies danced

⁶⁹ J. A. MacCulloch, 'The Mingling of Fairy and Witch Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Scotland', *Folk-Lore* 32 (1921), 227–44, at 228–30; Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, p. 137 (subsequent unreferenced citations are to this page).

⁷⁰ They also mention 'destroying crops', but this was rarely attributed either to fairies or to witches in Scotland. When witches attacked grain it was usually after it had been harvested, and attacks on the standing crops of the whole community were very rare, unlike on the Continent: Goodare, 'Scottish Witchcraft' (see above, n. 31), pp. 29–30.

in circles and left 'circular impressions in grass'; witches certainly danced, but were not associated with anything resembling fairy rings.

One contrasting motif was something that witches often did, but fairies did only rarely if at all. This was shape-shifting. Fairies were either visible as fairies, or they were invisible.⁷¹ People did not see a hare or a cat and think, 'That could be a fairy in animal form'. Belief in animal transformations was a belief about witches.⁷²

Three motifs were common to fairies and witches, but in practice did not operate in the same way for both. The first of these motifs was invisibility. For fairies, this was their normal state; it was surprising if a human could see them at all. Witches were normally visible, which was one reason why shape-shifting was believed to be important as a means of disguise. Transvection to another location would cause them to disappear from the first location, but this is not the same as invisibility. The second motif, related to this, was flight. Witches were often thought to fly, either on straws or on animals, or simply by their own power, but fairies hardly ever did this. They might appear and disappear in whirlwinds, but when it came to locomotion, fairies *rode*.⁷³ The third of these motifs is what Henderson and Cowan call 'injuring horses and cattle by shooting them with elf-shot and witch-shot'. There certainly was 'elf-shot', and a few witches used it, but elf-shot always came from fairies, and it was always called 'elf-shot'. I know of no early modern, or Scottish, evidence for 'witch-shot'.⁷⁴

A group of four motifs can be identified as common to fairies and witches, but also to others, so that it is hard to use them to draw a

⁷¹ Katharine Briggs, *The Vanishing People: A Study of Traditional Fairy Beliefs* (London, 1978), discusses fairy shape-shifting, but the only Scottish example she gives is the selkie, and none of the evidence seems to be from the early modern period.

⁷² There is much material on shape-shifting, awaiting a detailed study, in the Survey of Scottish Witchcraft: Lauren Martin and Joyce Miller, 'Some Findings from the Survey of Scottish Witchcraft', in Goodare, Martin, and Miller, *Witchcraft and Belief* (see above, n. 31), pp. 51–70, at pp. 54, 66.

⁷³ Briggs, *Vanishing People* (see above, n. 71), ch. 3. Robert Kirk thought that fairies 'swim in the air, neer the earth': Hunter, ed., *Occult Laboratory* (see above, n. 10), p. 79. However, this may reflect his demonological understanding of fairies, rather than popular belief; flying demons were important to demonology.

⁷⁴ Henderson and Cowan's 'witch-shot' seems to come from MacCulloch, who mentioned '*ylfagescot* and *haegtessan-gescot*, the elf-shot and witch-shot of early Anglo-Saxon formulae' (p. 229). This seems to refer to one formula only, *Wið færstice*, in which 'shot' is likely to mean '(pained with a) sharp, localised pain': Alaric Hall, *The Meaning of Elf, and Elves, in Anglo-Saxon England* (University of Glasgow PhD thesis, 2005), pp. 107–13, 168. For 'elf-shot' itself, see Alaric Hall, 'Getting Shot of Elves: Healing, Witchcraft and Fairies in the Scottish Witchcraft Trials', *Folklore* 116 (2005), 19–36.

fairy-witch connection. The first motif concerns times of day and times of year: noon and midnight; May eve, midsummer eve, and Hallowe'en. Noon was a fairy time but not a witch time. Midnight was a time for both, but also for other things; it was a good time to visit healing wells and lochs, for instance.⁷⁵ Times of the year are not so closely associated with fairies or with witches; certainly neither May eve, midsummer eve nor Hallowe'en were primarily associated with them, and Hallowe'en was mainly associated with ghosts.⁷⁶ Because Hallowe'en was adapted for use in witchcraft, it should be stressed that its primary ritual significance lay elsewhere. The second motif common to fairies and witches is 'music, dancing and feasting'. Both fairies and witches did these things, but so did ordinary humans.⁷⁷ The third motif is transgressive sex—fairies having sex with humans, witches with the Devil. It is hard to see a connection here, since fairies did not have sex with the Devil, and it was possible for humans to have transgressive sex without involving fairies or witches at all. A few witches had sex with fairies, but that does not constitute evidence that there was *overlap* between witches and fairies.⁷⁸ The fourth motif in this group, skill in healing, was again possessed by others as well as fairies and witches, and Henderson and Cowan point out that 'often it is the fairy who is thought to bestow these gifts on the witch'. With these motifs, again, we do not see fairies and witches behaving in the same distinctive ways.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ J. M. McPherson, *Primitive Beliefs in the North-East of Scotland* (London, 1929), pp. 48, 68.

⁷⁶ Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996), chs. 23–24 (May), 30 (midsummer), and 36 (Hallowe'en). On May games, see in more detail E. Patricia Dennison, 'Robin Hood in Scotland', in Julian Goodare and Alasdair A. MacDonald, eds., *Sixteenth-Century Scotland: Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 169–88.

⁷⁷ MacCulloch also says that an 'intruder on fairy or witch revels was likely to fare badly' (p. 229), but Henderson and Cowan wisely omit this. Apart from Burns's comic 'Tam o' Shanter', it probably applies only to fairies. Again wisely, they omit MacCulloch's statement that witches and fairies could both extract the soul or heart of a man, 'leaving him with none or with a fairy or demon soul, or a heart of straw' (p. 229).

⁷⁸ There is one hint of offspring from sexual relations between a fairy and a human. Isobel Strachan, alias Scudder (Aberdeen, 1597), was said to have learned her witchcraft from her mother, 'and hir mother learnit at ane elf man quha lay with hir': *Spalding Misc.*, vol. 1 (see above, n. 7), p. 177. This does not explicitly say that the 'elf man' was Strachan's father, though.

⁷⁹ One of Henderson and Cowan's 'motifs in common', second sight, was in fact rarely associated either with fairies or with witches. The possession of second sight hardly ever put the possessor at risk of being reputed a witch, while Kirk was unusual in his fairy theory of second sight: Hunter, ed., *Occult Laboratory* (see above, n. 10), p. 20.

We should conclude, therefore, that there was indeed a connection between fairies and witches. But the connection arises mainly from the fact that human magical practitioners drew on fairy beliefs and had relationships with fairies. It is unlikely that people thought that fairies and witches behaved in similar ways. It would never have been difficult to decide whether a given being was a fairy or a witch.

This conclusion applies to human witches—the kind who are most familiar to historians, having been feared, hated, and executed during the witch-hunts. Some Continental studies, however, have pointed to ‘witches’ whose status as human beings was not so clear, and these may have been closer to fairies. Night witches, or folkloric child-eating witches, were not thought of as members of the community in the way that human witches were. It has been suggested that fairies may have fulfilled a similar role in Scotland to these non-human witches on the Continent; further study of the topic is needed.⁸⁰ Alan Bruford wrote of Scottish Gaelic witch stories that ‘There are stories where it is doubtful whether a character is a supernatural *cailleach* or a mortal witch’.⁸¹ He did not find ambiguities between fairies and witches, however.

As a coda to this discussion of connections between fairies and witches, we should consider Margo Todd’s recent suggestion that there were connections between fairies and gypsies.⁸² This suggestion is sketched only briefly, but it mainly appears to concern gypsies’ magical powers and the services they offered. The idea of actual overlap between gypsies and fairies appears to rest on the case of Alison Pearson, who, according to Todd, confessed that her uncle William Simson had been ‘taken by a man of Egypt’ and later by the fairies. Closer inspection of this case, however, indicates that Pearson did not have human ‘Egyptians’ in mind; she confessed that Simson ‘wes tane away fra his fader be ane mann of Egypt, ane gyant, being bot ane barne, quha had him away to Egypt with him, quhair he remanit to the space of tuell yeiris or he come hame agane’.⁸³

⁸⁰ Goodare, ‘Scottish Witchcraft’ (see above, n. 31), p. 33. ‘Nicneven’, a name or sobriquet adopted by some real Scottish witches, may originally have been a folkloric night witch of this kind: Alison Hanham, ‘“The Scottish Hecate”: A Wild Witch Chase’, *Scottish Studies* 13 (1969), 59–64.

⁸¹ Alan Bruford, ‘Scottish Gaelic Witch Stories: A Provisional Type List’, *Scottish Studies* 11 (1967), 13–47, at 14.

⁸² Margo Todd, ‘Fairies, Egyptians and Elders: Multiple Cosmologies in Post-Reformation Scotland’, in Bridget Heal and Ole Peter Grell, eds., *The Impact of the European Reformation: Princes, Clergy and People* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 189–208, at pp. 206–08.

⁸³ Pitcairn, ed., *Trials* (see above, n. 1), 1:162.

Pearson seems to have thought of 'Egypt' as an abode of marvellous beings, which is not the same as regarding the *human* 'Egyptians' living in Scotland as marvellous beings. As with the alleged connection between fairies and human witches, the alleged connection between fairies and human gypsies has been overdone. It would never have been difficult to decide whether a given being was a fairy or a gypsy.⁸⁴

* * *

This may be a good point to pause and reflect on my methodology so far. I have been deliberately historical and cautious in my use of evidence. Henderson and Cowan mount an articulate and plausible defence of their use of early folklore collectors from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, on the grounds that these collectors 'were still in touch with traditions which were vital and persistent'.⁸⁵ Well, perhaps they were, but one question is what use they wanted to make of these traditions.

In reconstructing popular belief, even Robert Kirk, fascinating though his treatise is, can be an unhelpful guide. He was certainly in touch with traditions, but he shaped them to his own purpose. His material is frustratingly hard to link with genuine folklore.⁸⁶ The material I have found most helpful from Kirk is that from which he distances himself: he says that the common folk believe it, but he himself does not. Similarly, the witchcraft trial material is most reliable on folklore when it is distanced from it. If a trial record says that a witch met the Devil, that could be because it suited the prosecutors to say it, rather than because the witch really believed that she or he had met the Devil. Witchcraft trial material is more trustworthy on fairies, precisely because the elite did not believe in fairies, and had no reason to slant a witch's confessions towards them.⁸⁷ The only reason for writing down that a witch said that she or he had met the fairies can be that the witch had genuinely said this. The winnowing

⁸⁴ There was, however, a case of elision of gypsies and *witches*, in which Patrick Bodie had to do penance for 'consultatioun of witches' after he consulted some gypsies in 1619: *Selections from the Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod of Aberdeen*, ed. John Stuart (Aberdeen, 1846), p. 87.

⁸⁵ Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (see above, n. 2), p. 13.

⁸⁶ This conclusion is also reached by Hunter, ed., *Occult Laboratory* (see above, n. 10), p. 20.

⁸⁷ To say that 'everyone' believed in fairies in early modern times (Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* [see above, n. 2], p. 1) is quite misleading; no educated person did so. Even Kirk, who was highly unusual, thought that fairies were a kind of angels. See Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits* (see above, n. 3), pp. 22–24.

out of elite assumptions and misinterpretations leaves little material from Kirk, but a good deal from witchcraft trials.

There is extensive fairy material in ballads, but I have largely disregarded these. Many of them have a nineteenth-century provenance, and are hard to date to any earlier period. If we cannot be sure even that ballads on well-known historical events are contemporary, how can we tell the date of a fairy ballad from its text?⁸⁸ There are, it is true, several fairy ballads that can confidently be traced back to the sixteenth century or even the middle ages, as Emily Lyle has shown.⁸⁹ However, these particular ballads, classics though they are, happen to shed light mainly on the heartland of the fairy realm, rather than its boundaries; their fairies are clearly fairies. For ambiguous or borderline beings, the subjects of the present paper, one must turn rather to ballads that have not so far been traced before the nineteenth century.⁹⁰ But even if these ballads could be traced back to our period, we would face another problem: ballads are *stories*, and do not show conclusively that the beings contained therein were believed to be real.

The 'eldritch' poetry of sixteenth-century Scotland has recently come under scrutiny.⁹¹ There are numerous strange beings in it, and several different otherworlds (heaven, hell, fairyland). What can these tell us about

⁸⁸ The material is surveyed by Lizanne Henderson, 'The Road to Elfland: Fairy Belief and the Child Ballads', in Edward J. Cowan, ed., *The Ballad in Scottish History* (East Linton, 2000), pp. 54–72; she does not discuss the dating problem, however. For the way in which ballads could mutate over time, see a ballad with a nineteenth-century provenance, 'The Haughs of Cromdale', dealing with seventeenth-century events. Quite unhistorically, the gallant Montrose defeats an English army at a place where a Jacobite army would later be defeated by a Scottish government one: Hamish Henderson, *Alias MacAlias: Writings on Songs, Folk and Literature* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 28–30.

⁸⁹ Emily Lyle, *Fairies and Folk: Approaches to the Scottish Ballad Tradition* (Trier, 2007). The principal ballads she discusses are (in Francis J. Child's naming and numbering system) 'King Orfeo' (19), 'Thomas Rymer' (37), 'Tam Lin' (39), and 'Sir Cawline' (61).

⁹⁰ These would include 'Hind Etin' (41), about an 'etin' or giant, 'Young Beichan' (53), with its curious character 'the Belly Blin' who has been said to be a brownie, and 'The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry' (113), about a selkie. There are Continental parallels to 'Hind Etin', including a Danish one datable to the sixteenth century, in which the place of the 'etin' is taken by a dwarf, an elf, a hill-king, or a merman. See Francis J. Child, ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols. (Boston, Mass., 1882–84).

⁹¹ Priscilla Bawcutt, 'Elrich Fantasy in Dunbar and Other Poets', in *Bryght Lanternis: Essays on the Language and Literature of Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, ed. J. D. McClure and M. R. G. Spiller (Aberdeen, 1989), pp. 162–78; Keely Fisher, 'Eldritch Comic Verse in Older Scots', in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. Sally Mapstone (Edinburgh, 2005), pp. 292–313; Alaric Hall, 'The Etymology and Meanings of *Eldritch*', *Scottish Language* 26 (2007), 16–22.

folk belief? The answer must unfortunately be: in the present state of our knowledge at least, not much. This can be shown from Jacqueline Simpson's expert folkloric analysis of one 'eldritch' poem, Alexander Montgomerie's 'Flying with Polwart'. She has disentangled its folkloric content, showing that Montgomerie drew on various popular beliefs, especially about fairies and witches.⁹² But, of course, Montgomerie also included other beliefs. His principal sources were literary; he borrowed much of his framework from Ovid. His classical and intellectual material included an incubus, a mandrake, Pandora, nymphs, three-headed Hecatus, the Furies, Styx, Pluto, and a cockatrice.⁹³ Montgomerie's poem is thus a deliberately incongruous mixture of elements from different traditions. Polwart's parentage is at the centre of the poem and also at the centre of its incongruity, for he is begotten by 'an elf on ane aipe'. Apes were of interest to the elite as occasional menagerie items, but they were not folkloric.⁹⁴ Montgomerie's poem, as Simpson says in the title of her article, is 'burlesque', with deliberate incongruities for comic effect. Or, as David Parkinson puts it, the 'proliferation of grotesque combinations absurdifies the gruesome'.⁹⁵ Montgomerie provides no evidence that the fairy realm was genuinely thought to overlap with other uncanny regions.

Folkloric studies of the remaining 'eldritch' poems would be desirable, therefore, but they would be unlikely to yield much material for the present purpose. Simpson was using folk belief to explain Montgomerie, not the other way round. She drew on existing folkloric evidence to show where Montgomerie had got some of his material. Using Montgomerie (or Dunbar, or the other 'eldritch' authors) to provide evidence of folk belief would be another matter altogether. And, as with the ballads, the 'eldritch' poems are fantasies; they do not necessarily show us beings that were believed to be real. One of the purposes of this paper has been to show, however, that the winnowing out of doubtful material does leave

⁹² Jacqueline Simpson, "'The Weird Sisters Wandering': Burlesque Witchery in Montgomerie's *Flying*", *Folklore* 106 (1995), 9–20. For the literary context, see Roderick J. Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie: Poetry, Politics, and Cultural Change in Jacobean Scotland* (Tempe, Ariz., 2005), pp. 75–83. For the poem itself, see Alexander Montgomerie, *Poems*, ed. David J. Parkinson, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 2000), 1:141–75; all citations are from the 'Secund Invective'.

⁹³ Montgomerie, *Poems* (see above, n. 92), 1:144 (l. 21); 1:145 (ll. 29, 39); 1:149 (l. 149); 1:150 (l. 173); 1:151 (ll. 190, 192, 193); 1:153 (l. 239).

⁹⁴ Montgomerie, *Poems* (see above, n. 92), 1:144 (l. 22); Simpson, 'Weird Sisters Wandering' (see above, n. 92), p. 10.

⁹⁵ Montgomerie, *Poems* (see above, n. 92), 2:134.

a solid core of folkloric belief in real beings. What, then, can be said in conclusion about the taxonomy and ontology of such beings?

* * *

We should pay the common folk of early modern Scotland the compliment of assuming that their cosmology made sense to them. They may well have believed that the earth was flat—a belief of which the *Complaynt of Scotland* tried with well-meant earnestness to disabuse them in about 1550.⁹⁶ But they could use such a belief to make sense of a good deal of well-accepted data. Heaven was in the sky, hell was under the earth, and they themselves were in ‘middle-earth’ in between. Heaven contained God and angels; hell contained the Devil and demons. Ghosts, the spirits of the dead, were with one or the other. But where were the fairies?

The answer, evidently, is that fairies were in wild, uncanny, and magical places.⁹⁷ These places, including fairyland, were largely within ‘middle-earth’, though there was no doubt some flexibility and imprecision. Katherine Craigie’s hill-spirit, kirk-spirit, and water-spirit illustrate the conceptual range of such a cosmos. Hills and waters were wild places, beyond the boundaries of the cultivated land within which humans felt safe. Kirks had links to heaven and hell, both beyond middle-earth, but, with their kirkyards, they could also be the haunt of ghosts who remained on earth. One reason why we find more ghosts and demons in popular belief, and fewer saints and angels, may be because saints and angels were usually believed to remain in heaven. Folkloric demons were certainly this-worldly. As to the wild places: on the Continent we might have found forest-spirits as well as hill-spirits, but these were rare in early modern Scotland, which had few forests.⁹⁸ More study of the abodes of nature spirits might well elucidate the relationship between cultivated and wild places. Brownies, for instance, lived in people’s houses, or at least visited them, but where did they come *from*? Somewhere wild, presumably.

Fairies, and other nature spirits on the boundaries of the fairy realm, had several related functions in popular culture. They helped people: they gave people magical powers, and provided them with a cosmology

⁹⁶ *Complaynt of Scotland* (see above, n. 51), pp. 40–41. For educated Scots’ understanding of the earth at this time, see Alasdair A. MacDonald, ‘William Dunbar, Mediaeval Cosmography, and the Alleged First Reference to the New World in English Literature’, *English Studies* 68 (1987), 377–91.

⁹⁷ Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (see above, n. 2), pp. 39–45.

⁹⁸ T. C. Smout, Alan R. MacDonald and Fiona Watson, *A History of the Native Woodlands of Scotland, 1500–1920* (Edinburgh, 2005), ch. 2.

that enabled them to make sense of the world. They harmed people: they enforced taboos (including that against straying into wild places), and inflicted a range of misfortunes (thus providing people with explanations for these misfortunes). These two functions, helping and harming, were thus related. In a third function, they were vehicles for fantasy: they enabled people to explore their own human identity by telling stories of beings that were like humans but also unlike them. I have largely omitted discussion of this third function for analytical purposes, but a fuller analysis would need to take it into account. Indeed a really full analysis would also seek to incorporate the related functions of beings other than nature spirits.

To fulfil these functions, fairies and other nature spirits were often morally ambivalent. Emma Wilby has set out a framework for interpreting this. The main thrust of her argument is that people had relationships with 'fairy familiars', and that these were so similar to demons in their sometimes ambiguous morality that it was easy for interrogators to reinterpret them as demons.⁹⁹ Commendably, she refrains from trying to force all the evidence into a single category like 'fairy' (or 'familiar', or indeed 'fairy familiar'). Rather she argues, persuasively, for the *functional similarity* of various different beings once those who believed in them arrived in court. The equation of English familiars and Scottish fairies can be pushed too far, but they were similar in this respect. Her work shows how folkloric beings were reinterpreted as demons. What we need to ponder, though, is what the beings originally were in popular belief. A few people may really have experienced an encounter with a being that they thought was a demon, but the contamination of the sources by leading questions and elite assumptions usually makes this hard to demonstrate. The positive encounters that led people to adopt a spirit as a guide seem, on the whole, neither to have been demonic, nor to have been malevolent.

People were well aware that spirits in general were often malevolent, and that it was sometimes difficult to tell one spirit from another; this emerges from the material above on ambiguous spirits. Those people who established relationships with spirit-guides nevertheless thought that *their* spirit-guides, which were (in their own experience) largely benevolent, were *not* demons. Often, of course, the spirit-guides were fairies, though there were exceptions, like Andrew Man's Christsonday and Katherine Johnsdochter's bowman. What happened in many of these cases is that

⁹⁹ Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits* (see above, n. 3), ch. 7.

under hostile questioning (and sometimes torture), they lost confidence in their ability to draw the distinction. Willingly or unwillingly, they came to agree with their interrogators' interpretation of the spirits as demons. This shows that distinctions were difficult to draw: it does not show that there were no distinctions.

The boundaries of the fairy realm are obscure. They are partly obscure for us because of the limits of the Scottish sources. Nevertheless, we can see enough to be able to say that there were some real obscurities for contemporaries. The obscurity, for the elite, came from the boundary between fact and fiction. Fairies, like classical gods, were all right in fiction, but were not usually allowed to stray into the world of fact. Fiction, however, had more extensive, or at least more overt, political functions than it does today: court poets had political importance, classical gods on palaces carried political messages. A political function was a function in the world of fact. If fairies appeared in elite culture, then, they were fantasy beings, but they were still highly functional.

For the common folk, fairies were more straightforwardly factual, as well as functional. They undoubtedly existed, and some people believed that they had encountered them. The obscurity came from the multifarious character of the non-human beings in the popular cosmos. The 'wneardlie wights' might be fairies, or they might not. Some people thought they could draw the distinction; others—including some who had seen fairies, like Bessie Dunlop or Stephen Maltman—were wary of doing so.

Perhaps our understanding of popular cosmology needs to be reframed in the light of this conclusion. People 'believed in fairies', certainly. But what they ultimately believed in was 'wights'—beings that we can regard as *spirits*. Fairies constituted an important category of spirits, but their status as spirits was important, and this was a status that they shared with other beings. There were also other beings within the broader taxonomic category of nature spirits—notably brownies, trows, and giants—and other beings that were taxonomically and ontologically separate—notably angels, demons, and ghosts. The folklore of these latter beings was probably affected by these beings' importance in organised Christianity, with the common folk having both the opportunity and the obligation to refine and modify their own traditions about them in the light of what they were told about them from the pulpit. The cosmos of angels, demons, and ghosts was not fully folkloric.

The fairy realm was certainly folkloric. Elite disapproval of fairies, and attempts to turn them into demons, failed to shake the essentials of

popular belief in fairies—though evangelisation may have affected some folkloric details in ways that still require investigation. Faced with the onslaught of the Reformation, one reason for the fairies' resilience may actually have been the plurality of realms within the popular cosmos. The existence of other folkloric beings meant that fairies did not stand alone. Of course fairies existed; after all, so did brownies, trows, and giants. So did 'wneardlie wights'. The fairy realm was the largest and most imaginatively sophisticated part of the folkloric cosmos of early modern Scotland, but that cosmos also contained other neighbouring realms, and their boundaries require careful delineation.

'BULL-BEGGER': AN EARLY MODERN SCARE-WORD

Henk Dragstra

The Bull-Begger: Spirit, Thing, or Human Being?

In modern fairy dictionaries produced for the popular market, the 'Bull-beggar' appears as a 'tricksy spirit', lying in wait on the road playing dead in order to scare travellers.¹ This description of it can be traced to Ruth L. Tongue's reports on the folklore of Creech Hill, Somerset, in the early twentieth century.² But Tongue's 'Bull-Beggar' was as exceptional as it was local: to represent it as if in this particular guise it were generally known throughout England and throughout English history would be a falsification.³ It was generally well-known once; but the question what it was is much trickier than fairy catalogues would have us believe.

The earliest known uses of the word 'bull-begger', or rather, those occurring in the earliest extant texts, date from the 1580s.⁴ In his address 'To the Readers' prefacing his *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Reginald Scot spoke of 'Robin goodfellowe' as 'that great and ancient bulbegger'.⁵ In an oft-quoted chapter 'Of vaine apparitions, how people haue been brought to fear bugges', he enumerated the many terrors with which English children of his generation had been scared into obedience:

¹ So e.g. in Katherine Briggs, *A Dictionary of Fairies: Hobgoblins, Brownies, Bogies and Other Supernatural Creatures* (London, 1976); Carol Rose, *Spirits, Fairies, Gnomes and Goblins: An Encyclopedia of the Little People* (Bodmin, Cornwall, 1998); Mark Alexander, *A Companion to the Folklore, Myths, and Customs of Britain* (Stroud, 2002), all art. 'Bulldbeggar'; the phrase quoted is used by Alexander.

² R. L. Tongue, *Somerset Folklore*, ed. K. M. Briggs (London, 1965), pp. 121–22. Under the heading 'The Creech Hill Bull-Beggar', Tongue (or Briggs) cites three stories collected orally from unidentified informants; in none of these is the word 'bull-begger' actually used, so that it may be merely the collector's or editor's label. But the word was known in Somerset; see next note.

³ Joseph Wright's *The English Dialect Dictionary* (London, 1898) mentions instances in Scotland, the North Country, Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, and Devon, but his definitions go into no further detail than 'A hobgoblin; anything that causes a scare; a scarecrow'. In the example from West Devonshire he cited, Wright rendered *bèol-bagúr* as 'ghost'.

⁴ Although eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources spell 'bull-beggar', I shall use the spelling with *e* as default to emphasize the word's emergence in the sixteenth century.

⁵ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft, Wherein the Lewde Dealing of Witches and Witchmongers is Notable Detected*... (London, 1584), sig. B ii recto.

our mothers maids...haue so fraied vs with bull beggers, spirits, witches, vrchens, elues, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, faunes, sylens, kit with the cansticke [*sic*], tritons, centaurs, dwarfes, giants, imps, calcars, coniuors, nymphes, changlings, *Incubus*, Robin good-fellowe, the spoorne, the mare, the man in the oke, the hell waine, the fierdrake, the puckle, Tom thombe, hobgoblin, Tom tumbler, boneles, and such other bugs, that we are afraid of our owne shadowes...⁶

A year later, John Higin in *The Nomenclator* translated Latin *terrificamentum* as 'A scarebug: a bulbegger: a sight that frayeth and frighteth'.⁷ Both Scot's and Higin's instances testify that the bull-begger was scary, and the words 'bugs' and 'scarebug' suggest that it was an imaginary creature; nevertheless Scot made it clear that those childhood fears continued to haunt the adult imagination, especially at night and in churchyards.⁸ Higin translated *Maniae* as 'Hobgoblins, robbin goodfellow, bloudy-bone, raw head, and such like imagined spirits, as nurses doe fraye their babes withal, to make them still': the absence of a specific reference to the nursery when he mentioned a 'bulbegger' seems to imply that the latter was also feared by adults.⁹ Scot considered such fear a mark of weakness: phantoms like bull-beggars 'specially are spied and feared of sick folke, children, women, and cowards, who through weakness of minde and body, are shaken with vain dreames and continual fear'.¹⁰ Both authors therefore seem to have looked upon bull-beggars, though feared by some people, as purely imaginary creatures. A close look at Scot's list shows that it includes witches and conjurors, qualities commonly ascribed to existing individuals; but as the 1651 title of his book declares, he regarded these too as 'but imaginary erroneous conceptions'.¹¹

What must be an earlier instance of the word has been recorded in John Strype's late seventeenth-century biography of Sir Thomas Smith, who died in 1577. The appendices to the book include an oration by Smith in which he says:

⁶ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, pp. 152–53.

⁷ *The Nomenclator, or Remembrancer of Adrianus Iunius Physician*, trans. John Higin (London, 1585).

⁸ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, p. 153.

⁹ Cf. Louise Sylvester, 'Naming and Avoiding Naming Objects of Terror: A Case Study', in *Placing Middle English in Context*, ed. Irma Taavitsainen *et al.* (Berlin, New York, 2000), pp. 277–92.

¹⁰ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, p. 152.

¹¹ *Scot's Discovery of VVitchcraft: Proving the Common Opinions of Witches Contracting with Dìvels, Spirits, or Familiars... To Be But Imaginary Erronious Conceptions and Novelities* (London, 1651).

And when I marked further what hast they made to go to the Battel again, I began to laugh at my self, and thought that the Fear in which you put me was with a Vizor only which you had taken upon you, and so made me afraid, as Children be afraid of Bearbuggs and Bulbeggars.¹²

In an early seventeenth-century text by William Perkins and Ralph Cudworth, it was not a maid or nurse but the parents themselves who

insinuate vnto their children, terrible things, of the beare, and bull-begger, that they may keepe them from places of hurt and danger. And this may be done without fault, for it is one thing to contrary the truth, and an other to speake or doe something diuerse vnto it without contrariety.¹³

Both texts evidently agree with Scot and Higinis that bull-beggars were fictitious creatures. Gabriel Harvey showed particular fondness of the word; an example is:

some odd wittes forsooth, will needes be accompted terrible BullBeggars [*sic*], and the only Killcowes of their age: for how should they otherwise keep the simple world in awe: or scare multitudes of plaine folke, like idiot crowes, and innocent dooues?¹⁴

This instance, from 1592, though not explicitly stating that a bull-begger was a mere fiction, nevertheless implies it by associating it with simpletons. Samuel Harsnett mentioned in his *A declaration of egregious popish impostures* (1603) how 'Horace the Heathen spied long agoe, that a Witch, a Wizard, and a Coniurer were but bul-beggars to scare fooles'. It was not only girls or boys, but also many an 'old wizard', he claimed, who would not go out into the dark without performing some Popish rituals against night spirits.¹⁵ The contempt expressed in these instances is unmistakable: for an adult to fear such creatures was to be childish, backward, and Popish—all despicable qualities to a self-respecting English Protestant. Reginald Scot felt that the time had come to eradicate such superstitions, and that they were already on the wane:

¹² John Strype, *The Life of the Learned Sir Thomas Smith Kt.* (London, 1698), p. 34.

¹³ William Perkins and Ralph Cudworth, *A Commentarie or Exposition, vpon the Fiue First Chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians* (London, 1604), p. 64.

¹⁴ Gabriel Harvey, *Four Letters, and Certaine Sonnets Especially Touching Robert Greene, and Other Parties, by Him Abused* (London, 1592), p. 36.

¹⁵ Samuel Harsnett, *A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures* (London, 1603), pp. 137, 134–35.

Well, thanks be to God, this wretched and cowardlie infidelitie, since the preaching of the gospel, is in part forgotten; and doubtless, the rest of those illusions will in short time (by Gods grace) be detected and vanish awaie.¹⁶

His prediction came true where the bull-begger was concerned, for after Harsnett, serious denunciations of fear of that phantom by adults seem to have ceased. But casual references to it as a child-disciplining device continued well into the eighteenth century, often in a comparative sub-clause, such as

Euen as a mother, when her childe is wayward, threatneth to throwe it to the Wolfe, or scareth it with some pocar, or bul-begger, to make it cling more vnto her and be quiet: So the Lord oftentimes sheweth vs the terrible faces of troubles and daungers, to make vs cleaue and cling faster vnto him ...¹⁷

Such instances make it clear that bull-beggars were considered an empty threat.¹⁸

But were they totally imaginary? In Thomas Brown's dismissal of scandal-mongers as 'Terrible Bull-beggars indeed! as formidable as *Bevis* and *Garagantua* [*sic*]. Fogh, Fogh! meer Scare-Crows to fright Children and Jack-Daws', the reference to a scare-crow suggests a contraption of some sort.¹⁹ This is stated explicitly in a text of 1680 by Roger L'Estrange:

They cry aloud against *idolatry, Superstition, Abominations, Symbolical Ceremonies, Will-Worship, Humane Inventions*, and Order their *Disciples* just as they do their Children: They dresse up a Terrible thing of *Clouts*, and call it a *Bull-begger*, which is no other then a *Mormo* of their own Creating.²⁰

¹⁶ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (see above, n. 5), p. 153.

¹⁷ Arthur Dent, *The Plaine Man's Path-Way to Heauen* (London, 1607), pp. 109–10.

¹⁸ Further instances include 'When Children have done a *fault*, Mothers use to fright them with *Bull-beggars*; the Childe thinks surely they *will have him*, but the mother hath a *double pollicie*, viz. to make them *hate the fault*, and *love them the better*; for they runne to the *Lappe* to *hide* them, and then will she make her *owne conditions*', Richard Younge, *A Counterpoyson* (London, 1641), pp. 16–17; '*childrens Bull-beggars*, and *scarecrows*', Roger Williams, *The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody* (London, 1652), p. 67; 'We suck in errors, with our Mother's Milk. We are taught when we are Children to be afraid of Bull-beggars; and when we are men, we can scarce throw off the *Idea*', Whitelocke Bulstrode, *Letters between Doctor Wood a Roman Catholick, the Pretender's Physician, and Whitelocke Bulstrode, Esq* (London, 1717), pp. 74–75. I gratefully acknowledge the help of my colleague John Flood in collecting these and other instances.

¹⁹ Thomas Brown, *The Third Volume of the Works of Mr. Thomas Brown* (London, 1708), p. 74. This meaning of the word was still known in nineteenth-century Devonshire (William Frederick Rock, *Jim and Nell: A Dramatic Poem*, privately printed 1867, p. 4, p. 41).

²⁰ Roger L'Estrange, *The Casuist Uncas'd* (London, 1680), p. viii.

If a bull-begger could be made of 'clouts', perhaps it could also be a human being disguised in such rags. Sir Thomas Smith's phrase, quoted above, suggests that it could be impersonated by means of a mask. In Thomas Shelton's translation of *Don Quixote*, the old knight points out to Sancho: 'look what wicked vncouth fellowes come to encounter mee; looke what a troope of Hobgoblins oppose themselues against mee; looke what vgly visages play the Bull-beggars with us'.²¹ A satirical poem of 1709 warned its female readers about 'Bullbegger B—', a stern critic of women's fashions: 'In Fury he then will put on his Bull Faces, / And wo to your Rumps and your Ribbons and Laces'.²² It seems likely enough that as long as scaring children was an accepted practice, this might be done by impersonation; indeed 'playing the bull-begger' may have been a custom targeting grown-ups as well.²³ In 1716 a contributor to *The Tatler*, relating an encounter with a masked man, who turned out to be less frightening than he looked, called him a 'harmless Bull-beggar, who delights to fright innocent People, and set them a gallopping'.²⁴ Both these eighteenth-century instances evidently refer to a playful activity, perhaps a form of mummery.²⁵ References to bull-beggars that do not explicitly point out their imaginary nature may therefore refer to such palpable but harmless manifestations. John Sergeant in *Schism dispatch't* (1657) reminds his opponent that he, Sergeant, has challenged him 'to speak out, and say either I or no, to two points which are horrible Bull-beggars to him, wheresoever he meets them'.²⁶ It is not likely that this phrase, while hinting that Bull-beggars can actually be met, means that the speaker believes in them as spirits. It seems safe to conclude that, if in the sixteenth century bull-beggars may have been a superstition entertained by part of the adult population, seventeenth-century and later uses of the word implied that believing in

²¹ *The Second Part of the History of Don Quixote* (London, 1620), trans. Thomas Shelton, p. 193.

²² Anonymous, 'Young Ladies beware...', *The British Apollo* 2.52 (Sept. 23, 1709), 251–52.

²³ Ludwig Lavater of Zürich reported that such a practice was 'a common one in many places' (*Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyght* ... [London, 1572], p. 21), but these places may not have included England.

²⁴ *The Tatler*, August 15, 1710.

²⁵ Space does not allow me further to pursue this speculation here, for which possible evidence is to be found in various accounts of folk mummings, though not under the name of 'bull-beggars'. Among all the fancy etymologies for the word proffered at the time there is no reference to such a custom, which suggests that literate individuals were not cognizant of it.

²⁶ John Sergeant, *Schism Dispatch't* (London, 1657), p. 95.

them as spirits was considered absurd, although they might take a concrete form as human artefacts or impersonations.

While Scot and Harsnett rejected the practice of scaring children into submission on religious grounds, disapproval in the eighteenth century tended to be based on rationalist principles, as in Noël Antoine Pluche's *Spectacle de la nature*, published in English translation in 1763.²⁷ Pluche argued that a good mother should carefully shield her child's rational faculties, 'early fencing that tender Reason with Barriers impenetrable to all idle Tales, Stories of Thefts, Murders, Imprisonments and Executions, and to all Pictures of Visions, Bull-beggars, and Hob-gobblings' (VI: 39). By the end of the century, a more sentimental version of this pedagogy had become common enough to spread to mass literature, such as the American chapbook *Tommy Thumb's Song Book, for All Little Masters and Misses, To Be Sung to Them by Their Nurses, Until They Can Sing Themselves*. Written by a pseudonymous 'Nurse Lovechild', it contained 'a letter from a lady on nursing', which urged that children's tender minds be treated with care and circumspection:

But this in particular, I insist on, above all others, that you never mention a Bull Beggar, Tom Poker, Raw Head and Bloody Bones, &c. lest you make such frightful Impressions on their tender Minds, as may never be eradicated.²⁸

Perhaps this change in pedagogical orthodoxy contributed towards the word's obsolescence. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts, mention of bull-beggars became progressively rare in mainstream English.²⁹ With the exception of some dialect dictionaries and fairy catalogues, dictionaries of twentieth-century English do not include the word at all.

²⁷ Noël Antoine Pluche, *Spectacle de la nature: Or, Nature Display'd. Being Discourses on Such Particulars of Natural History As Were Thought Most Proper to Excite the Curiosity and Form the Minds of Youth* (London, 1763).

²⁸ Nurse Lovechild, *Tommy Thumb's Song Book* (Worcester, Mass., 1788), p. 5.

²⁹ Nathan Bailey, who included the word in his *Universal Etymological English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (London, 1724), omitted it in his revised edition, first published 1760. William Toone included the word in his *A Glossary and Etymological Dictionary of Obsolete and Uncommon Words* (London, 1832), and so did James Orchard Halliwell in *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words, Obsolete Phrases, Proverbs, and Ancient Customs from the Fourteenth Century* (London, 1847); an anonymous article on 'Words and Phrases of the Eighteenth Century' in *Gentleman's Magazine* 4 (Sept. 1867) discussed it as being 'curious, and now almost obsolete' (p. 357). James Murray listed 'bull-beggar' as an obsolete word in his *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, for which he completed the A–B entries in 1888 (later re-edited as the *Oxford English Dictionary*). Joseph Wright's *The English Dialect Dictionary* (London, 1898), included some nineteenth-century instances.

The Bull-Begger: What Were Its Traditional Features?

While agreeing that bull-beggars were thought scary, our historical informants differ greatly about their most basic features, such as their gender, and whether they operated singly or in groups. We sometimes find a man compared to a bull-begger, as in the example from *The Tatler*; but many sources refer to the phantoms in the plural, where personal pronouns tell us nothing about their gender. Scot's bull-begger Robin Goodfellow was evidently a fellow; so, one presumes, were the carriers of Papal bulls. But Robert L'Estrange, as we have seen, spoke of a bull-begger as a thing; and feminine gender may even have been implied when Andrew Marvell said of public conscience: 'Ay, Private Conscience is a meer trollop to her, an old Beldam superannuate, and a Bulbegger fit to fright Children'.³⁰ Dictionaries, as we shall see later, systematically feature the word in the singular, as dictionaries tend to do; but their authors do not commit themselves as to its gender, proffering definitions in neuter terms such as 'terrificament', 'terrifier', and 'something terrible'.

The same uncertainty prevails on the issue what exactly bull-beggars were supposed to be like. What horrifying features were attributed to them? They may have varied considerably from one household to the next; but if the name, or signifier, was an oral tradition, cannot the concept, or signified, have had traditional features too? As this essay will demonstrate, reliable details about this genus of phantom are hard to find. For one thing, references to it are less numerous than instances of 'rawhead and bloody-bones', and of 'hobgoblins', which were employed for similar purposes.³¹ What instances we have offer a tantalizing array of features ascribed to bull-beggars; but they invariably present problems of interpretation.

In a study of frightening figures used in twentieth-century Newfoundland, John Widdowson collected instances of the 'boo-bagger', evidently a sibling of the bull-begger.³² Those instances were all in the autobiographic mode, furnished by individuals who had been threatened with

³⁰ Andrew Marvell, *The Rehearsall Transpros'd; the Second Part* (London, 1673), pp. 250–51.

³¹ EEBO/LION yields some fifty hits for 'Raw-head and bloody-bones' and twice that number for 'Hobgoblin', but only about half as many for 'Bull-begger'. For discussions of the former, see John Widdowson, *If You Don't Be Good: Verbal Social Control in Newfoundland* (St. Johns, Newfoundland, 1977), pp. 198–201; Archer Taylor, 'Raw Head and Bloody Bones', *The Journal of American Folklore* 69 (1956), 114, 175; Donald D. Simmons, 'A Further Note on Raw Head and Bloody Bones', *The Journal of American Folklore* 70 (1957), 358–59.

³² Widdowson, *If You Don't Be Good*, pp. 165–70.

that phantom themselves, and contain details such as the 'boo' sound he or it made and the bag he carried to abduct children in. But these features were of course directly related to the component elements of the word 'boo-bagger', and cannot be simply transferred to 'bull-begger'. As that word is now obsolete, with the possible exception of some dialects, literary instances from the past are all the evidence of its meaning that we can hope to find. Even more than much other oral lore, the concept seems to have fallen between two stools: while the tradition in which it must have flourished is now history, the world of letters, though using it for its own purposes, gave it only the most casual attention.³³ This essay will therefore examine various contextual factors that may have prevented the concept of the bull-begger from preserving or developing definite features in literary texts.

As observed above, serious denouncement of the bull-begger as a superstition held by adults seems to have ceased with Harsnett's book of 1603. What straightforward seventeenth-century references to bull-beggars remain, such as that by Perkins and Cudworth, tend to be part of similes or other tropes, inserted parenthetically or casually in discourse about quite different topics. Besides such cursory but clear instances of the word, however, many more remain inconclusive because they are downright fanciful or fictional. Details divulged in such instances cannot be taken as evidence of general usage; they may be the result of literary manipulation, as the following examples will illustrate.

In a play by Thomas Dekker, three characters have been magically transformed into ugly horned creatures. The perpetrator of this prank, disguised as a French doctor come to cure them, mocks them in a *faux* French accent: 'Ha, ha, ha, to marke how like tree bul-beggera, dey stand'.³⁴ Perhaps we are to conclude from this instance that bull-beggars were traditionally imagined as wearing horns; but just as likely, the author may have been indulging in creative etymology, interpreting the word in this way for this particular occasion.

Henry Killigrew in one of his plays has one character come in dressed 'to appeare horrid'; another, named Comastes, accosts him with 'Boe,

³³ This probably also applies to 'rawhead and bloodybones' and to 'hobgoblins', as well as other terrifiers; but with far fewer instances, 'bull-begger' provides a more circumscribed subject of inquiry, appropriate to the size of this essay.

³⁴ Thomas Dekker, *The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus* (London, 1600), sig. I4v.

boe, O Bull-begger! what art thou? who let thee loose?'³⁵ We can hardly conclude from this that a Bull-begger was thought of as something to be roared at, for that would make it a very unlikely scare-child. In a play by John Fletcher, cashiered soldiers are reported to be roaming the town: 'they all have trades now, And roare about the streets like Bull-beggers'.³⁶ This suggests much more plausibly that Bull-beggers were themselves supposed to roar, which would certainly add to the scare, and seems a suitable noise for a bull-like creature to make. Gabriel Harvey, in his *A New Letter of Notable Contents* (1593) recounts how St. Dunstan 'led the Diuell by the nose Autem, vp and downe the house, till the roaring beast bellowed-out like a bull-beggar' (sig. C2r); but the roaring here is as much associated with devils as with bull-beggers, just as it is in Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*:

in our childhood our mothers maids have so terrified us with an uglie devil having hornes on his head, fire in his mouth, and a taile in his breech, eyes like a bason, fanges like a dog, clawes like a bear, a skinne like a Niger, and a voice roring like a Lion, whereby we start and are afraid when we here one cry Bough.³⁷

In a poem by Robert Wild (1672), it is Raw-head and Bloodybones who make a roaring noise: 'The Children of the Church are frighted: oh! / The Pope's Raw-head-and-bloody-bones cry Boh / Behind the door!'³⁸ If William Penn knew of any difference between this scary creature and the bull-begger, he did not care to point it out: 'These *Bull-Beggers*, and *Raw-Heads* and *Bloody-Bones*, are the Malice of some, and Weakness of others. But time, that Informs Children, will tell the World the meaning of Fright'.³⁹ Bull-beggers might roar; but not exclusively, and not invariably.

Perhaps authors were able to refer to features of bull-beggers so casually because they took it for granted that their readers were generally

³⁵ Henry Killigrew, *The Conspiracy, a Tragedy, as it Vvas Intended, for the Nuptials, of the Lord Charles Herbert, and the Lady Villers* (London, 1638), reprinted as *Pallantius and Eudora* (London, 1653), sig. E2v.

³⁶ John Fletcher, *The Loyal Subject* (London, 1647), p. 41.

³⁷ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (see above, n. 5), p. 113.

³⁸ Robert Wild, *Poetica Licentia* (London, 1672), pp. 11–12. The name can be used both with singular and plural verb, though the singular seems to be the more common and original; see Taylor, 'Raw Head and Bloody Bones' (see above, n. 31), 174. For a discussion of the interjection *Boh*, *boo* etc. see John Widdowson, 'The Bogeyman: Some Preliminary Observations of Frightening Figures', *Folklore* 82 (1971), pp. 107–08.

³⁹ William Penn, *Good Advice to the Church of England, Roman Catholick and Protestant Dissenter* ... (London, 1687), p. 50.

familiar with them—that everybody knew bull-beggars wore horns and roared. But the instances cited prove neither that such assumptions were made nor that they were justified. Comastes in the scene of Killigrew's play described above continues his address with 'where is any gold hid?', which suggests that bull-beggars were traditionally held to hide treasure; but closer examination shows that this is merely the speaker's speculation, based on his general impression that the other character is an otherworldly apparition:

what rare things shall I know if I can get him speake, I'll inquire the fortune of the Kingdome for the next thousand yeares, that's not worth the asking. I'll inquire the age of the World and where her treasure lyes, he cannot chuse but know the very heart of the earth. (sig. E2v)⁴⁰

As a superstitious character, Comastus might have made an interesting informant on bull-beggars; but as a farcical figure, he must be rejected for his obtuseness and associative style of thinking.

What is clear is that bull-beggars lent themselves well to polemic purposes: if fear of them was childish or foolish, they would serve both to challenge allies into better courage and to defuse threats made by opponents. The word was used particularly often in anti-papist invective, where it provided a welcome punning allusion to Papal bulls; so, for instance, in John Boys's *Workes*, where Cardinal Bellarmine was called 'The Popes Bull-begger'.⁴¹ John Taylor 'the Water Poet' was probably hinting at this in his description of 'the Great Eater of Kent': 'The name of Good-friday affrights him like a Bulbegger; a long Grace before meate, strikes him into a Quotidian Ague'.⁴² Jonathan Swift exploited this device in *A Tale of a Tub*: thinly disguised as 'Lord Peter', the Vatican is there said to own a herd of bulls, which '[s]ometimes he would set . . . a roaring to fright naughty boys and make them quiet'; but

they were no better than a sort of sturdy, swaggering beggars; and where they could not prevail to get an alms, would make women miscarry and

⁴⁰ Cf. Thomas Heywood, *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells Their Names, Orders and Offices the Fall of Lucifer with his Angells* (London, 1635), p. 570; Minor White Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare* (New York, 1930), pp. 144–47.

⁴¹ *The Workes of Iohn Boys Doctor in Diuinitie and Deane of Canterburie* (London, 1630), p. 550.

⁴² John Taylor, *The Great Eater of Kent* (London, 1630), p. 18.

children fall into fits; who to this very day usually call sprites and hobgoblins by the name of bull-beggars.⁴³

Taking Swift's satire at face value, John Ayliffe wrote in his very unface-tious *Parergon juris canonici anglicani*:

And because they often carry'd the Papal Thunder of Excommunication along with them, for the Non-payment of the Pope's pretended Dues, they became a Terror to weak and simple People for some Ages, till at length from their frequent Demands (which was only Begging at first) these Fulminations from the *Vatican* were turn'd into Ridicule; and as they were called *Bull-Beggars*, they were used as Words of Scorn and Contempt, and only repeated to quiet and frighten ignorant Children withal.⁴⁴

This was another case of creative etymology; 'popular etymology' would be a misnomer if that phrase implies oral currency, for the pun on Papal bulls was evidently a literary invention and practice.

We have argued that if bull-beggars originally haunted the pre-literary world of uneducated folk and little children, their absorption into a literary tradition affected their features. As eighteenth- and nineteenth-century instances of the word are progressively likely to be products of literary transmission and manipulation, the most reliable testimonies to the bull-begger's original features must be the earliest instances. Among these, straightforward instances will be more reliable than fictional or fancifully rhetorical ones; we therefore turn to autobiographical statements and scholarly explanations and definitions, which formally present themselves as individual testimonies and as objective accounts of collectively held concepts respectively.

Autobiographical Instances of the Word 'Bull-Begger'

Autobiographical reports such as John Widdowson collected for twentieth-century boo-baggers are extremely rare for early modern bull-beggars; unfortunately what few cases can be found are unreliable, or vague, or both. A well-known example of a nurse trying to scare her charge into silence, which has a convincing autobiographic ring, occurs in a pamphlet by John Taylor, first published in 1621. When coaxing and shushing did not help, Taylor says,

⁴³ Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, 2nd ed. (London, 1704), pp. 99–100.

⁴⁴ John Ayliffe, *Parergon juris canonici Anglicani: Or, a Commentary, by Way of Supplement to the Canons and Constitutions of the Church of England* (London, 1726), p. 132.

Then she (in anger) in her armes would snatch me,
 And bid the Begger, or Bull-begger catch me;
 With take him Begger, take him, would she say

upon which a real-life beggar, conveniently at hand, would grab him as if to take him away.⁴⁵ The passage suggests an equation between a beggar and a bull-begger, which from the child's perspective is entirely plausible: as Thomas Dekker reported in one of his pamphlets, so-called Bedlam beggars, 'walking up and down the country, are more terrible to women and children, than the name of Raw-head and Bloody-bones, Robin Goodfellow or any other hobgoblin'.⁴⁶ John Harvey equated beggars with bull-beggars in an anti-papal publication of 1588: 'Forsooth loosers must haue their words: and beggers will needes be somewaies bulbeggars'.⁴⁷ It seems tempting to look for the origin of 'bull-beggars' in scary aspects of Elizabethan and Jacobean beggars, which were numerous and have been plentifully documented; but by themselves these two instances have no etymological authority, being a play upon words, a common practice in contemporary polemic pamphleteering.⁴⁸

The next relevant text in the autobiographical mode that I have been able to find is of the early eighteenth century, exhaustively titled *Round about Our Coal-fire: or, Christmas Entertainments. Containing, Christmas Gambols, Tropes, Figures, &c., with Abundance of Fiddle-Faddle-Stuff; such as Stories of Fairies, Ghosts, Hobgoblins, Witches, Bull-beggars, Rawheads and Bloody-Bones, Merry Plays, &c. for the Diversion of Company in a Cold Winter-Evening, Besides Several Curious Pieces Relating to the History of Old Father Christmas; Setting Forth What Hospitality Has Been, and What It Is Now. Very Proper to be Read in All Families. Adorn'd with Many Curious Cuts*.⁴⁹ Though a chapbook, aimed at the lower end of the market, its attitude towards the customs it pretends to describe is both patronizing and nostalgic; the book offers its readers an opportunity to re-enact these old-

⁴⁵ John Taylor, *The Praise, Antiquity, and Commodity, of Beggery, Beggars, and Begging* (London, 1621), sig. B4r.

⁴⁶ Thomas Dekker, *O per se O* (London, 1612), pp. 371–72.

⁴⁷ John Harvey, *A Discoursiue Probleme Concerning Prophetes*... (London, 1588), p. 73, sig. L1r.

⁴⁸ Popular fear of beggars is discussed in William C. Carroll, *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca and London, 1996), and in my "The Beggar Comes!": Allegorical Demonisation of the Destitute Other in Early Seventeenth-Century Popular Prints", *English Studies* 85 (2004), 311–23.

⁴⁹ *Round about Our Coal-fire*, 2nd ed. (London, 1732[?]). Dated editions of the pamphlet are of 1734 and 1796.

fashioned country customs in a literary form.⁵⁰ The persona of the anonymous author is equally two-faced, alternating apparent seriousness with plain fiddle-faddle; where he is autobiographical, he is also facetious:

I have Witnesses enough to assert my conjecture, for my Cousin Sarah, Cousin Dolly, Cousin Nancy, and a score more of them, when any Stories are told of Witches, Hobgoblins, Bull-Beggars, Rawheads and Bloody-bones, Ghosts, &c. will croud together into a Bed, in a hot Summer's Night, and snug their Heads under the Sheets, with sweats more than a Pound of Venice-Treacle could give them, so great is the Fear they are possess'd with when they hear the lamentable stories handed down to us by our Great Grandmothers.⁵¹

The same attitude pervades his brief chapter 'Treating of Hobgoblins, Raw-heads and Bloody-bones, Buggy-Bows, Tom-pokers, Bull-beggars; and such like horrible Bodies':

One of the great Amusements, when the Country-folks begin to repose themselves, is to relate the direful Account of the above Monsters, which their Nurses or Mothers had describ'd to them, under the most terrible Shapes; I confess I was a long time before I could get over it, for my Nurse so imprint them in my Mind, that many a Time I had none of the best Smells in the Bed where I lay; and then I as surely felt the smart of the Rod the next Morning...⁵²

Such narrative, presenting as a merry pastime the terrifying and caning of children who wetted and soiled themselves in anguish, evidently caters to the crude sense of humour of an adult readership rather than try to recall genuine childhood experiences. Indeed it may well be pure fiction, the anonymous author merely using an autobiographical style as a means to please his readers.

The chapbook's illustrations include a woodcut depicting 'The Hobgoblin Society', facetiously claimed to be based on 'an original Painting of *Salvator Rosa*' (see Figure 1). It shows some gargoyles, products of the artist's fantasy, possibly inspired by models such as Rosa's paintings.⁵³ One of these creatures seems to wear horns, and its snout may have been intended as a bull's. It is standing behind a table with some documents

⁵⁰ Such rustic pastime was a fashionable theme in literature of the period, cf. Henry Bourne, *Antiquitates Vulgares, or The Antiquities of the Common People* (Newcastle, 1725), pp. 76–77; Mark Akenside, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London, 1744), pp. 24–25.

⁵¹ *Round about Our Coal-fire* (see above, n. 49), pp. v–vi.

⁵² *Round about Our Coal-fire*, pp. 12–13.

⁵³ One figure bears a vague resemblance to a monster in Rosa's 'Temptation of St Anthony'.



*The Hobgoblin Society, from an original Painting
of Salvator Rosa.*

Figure 1: The Hobgoblin Society from *Round about our Coal-Fire*, 2nd ed. (London, 1732 [?]), p. 12. Reproduced with permission of the British Library.

and an inkwell and quill on it; which may be another allusion to Papal bulls, but makes the figure unlikely as a beggar and unimpressive as a child-scaring apparition. The author distinguishes the various depictions no further than: 'just as you see them in the Picture [, s]o I imagin'd them, one was to Bite, another to scratch, another to Bully, &c'.⁵⁴ Perhaps, applying a child's etymology, he imagined the bull-begger to bully; but the woodcut does not illustrate that. Stories of childhood terrors, the chapbook's text and illustration imply, are good for a laugh; but like dirty nappies, they should not be scrutinized too closely.

⁵⁴ *Round about Our Coal-fire* (see above, n. 49), p. 13. I have emended the original punctuation.

The only other autobiographical reference to a bull-begger I have found is remarkably late, dating from 1783. In a journal article 'On Apparitions and Old Wives Fables', an anonymous contributor wrote, in support of the rationalist pedagogical principles that were becoming fashionable, about 'the trick of nurses, who, to quiet infants, terrify their imaginations, by such horrid phantasms, as bring on an habitual weakness of the mind, and render it a prey to fears, which even its mature judgment cannot wholly suppress'. Speaking 'from experience', he narrated how his nurse assailed him with spectres of 'a headless horse . . . a host of giants with grim visages, devils breathing fire, and bleeding skeletons with clanking chains'.⁵⁵ The narrative is frank, child-friendly, and retrospective; the author takes his own childhood fears seriously, describing his infantile self in heroic terms and admitting to some vestigial fears in his adult life. He even admits to having been defeated by the bull-begger, here in a solo appearance:

But there is one being, who, by attacking my imagination when it was defenceless, hath secured his post; and I almost despair of ever disposing him so effectually, but that he will frequently rally his forces and renew the engagement. This monster of enchantment is vulgarly called a *Bull-Beggar*. My nurse, like another sorceress, had him at command. At her call, he appeared: and, when she waved her hand, he vanished. But not so the terrible impression of him on my scarred fancy.⁵⁶

From a witness so willing to expose his vulnerable side—though safely anonymous—we may well expect to find out at last what the Bull-Beggar was supposed to be like. But at this point, the author disappointingly abandons his childhood memories to turn to affairs of the present in a jocular tone. This part of the text refers to the Bull-Beggar as a 'he' and includes some tropes hinting that he may have 'roared' and 'bellowed', but nothing more definite about him is said. The article, after all, is not about him, but about the general thesis that '[e]arly ideas are never to be effaced'; the bull-begger is only one element in the nurse's 'sorcery' and in the 'Old Wives Fables' of the article's title, spread by her and her kind like a disease that must be eradicated.⁵⁷

Finding individual autobiographical accounts so scarce and unrevealing, we turn to what might be called collective autobiography for additional information. Reginald Scot made his accusation against 'our

⁵⁵ Anonymous, 'On Apparitions and Old Wives Fables', *The London Magazine* 52 (March, 1783), 123–24.

⁵⁶ 'On Apparitions' (see above, n. 55), 124.

⁵⁷ 'On Apparitions', 123.

mothers maids' and their familiar spirits on behalf of a whole generation of Englishmen; but his list of 'bugs' is far too long to represent any single maidservant's repertoire. Scot's intention in drawing up his compilation was evidently rhetorical, emphasizing the arbitrariness, chaos, and excess of the superstitious phantasmagoria, for which he blamed Papist teaching. A hint of Scot's sleight of hand shows itself when we compare this passage, where 'bull-beggars' and 'Robin good-fellow' are itemized separately to boost the list's length, to his address 'To the Readers', where he speaks of 'Robin goodfellowe, that great and ancient bulbegger'.⁵⁸ And of course satyrs, pans, fauns, Silenuses, tritons, centaurs, nymphs and incubi bespeak an erudition beyond the reach of servant girls. All these words tell us is that Scot was a man of letters who knew his classical mythology.

Samuel Harsnett's account, though not strictly speaking autobiographical, presents itself as the testimony of an eye-witness. But its reference to bull-beggars figures in an enumeration copied item for item from Reginald Scot's list quoted above; evidently he was not documenting oral traditions as he knew them, but following Scot's literary example, demonstrating in the process his disinterest in child-scaring as an actual phenomenon.⁵⁹ Lists of scary phantoms became a convention in English folklore studies. In an anonymous 'Supplement to the Cyclopaedia' published in the 1740's, the entry on 'Being' included a category 'Imaginary beings, or creatures of the fancy', based on Scot's list, now in alphabetical order, with twenty-five additions, mostly from the classics.⁶⁰ M. A. Denham, in a tract of 1846, omitted almost all classical phantoms as well as several obsolete native ones, but finding plenty of up-to-date native British equivalents to replace them, totalled thirty-three items, the same number as Scot's list.⁶¹ He replaced 'bull-beggars' by 'mock-beggars', a clear sign that both words meant nothing to him; the list, like Scot's and Harsnett's, merely served to evoke an image of the British fairy world as a mind-boggling and terrifying hotchpotch of superstition.⁶² In a much expanded version of the same list,

⁵⁸ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (see above, n. 5), sig. B ii recto.

⁵⁹ Harsnett, *A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures* (London, 1603), p. 135.

⁶⁰ In *Miscellaneous Correspondence: Containing Essays, Dissertations, &c. on Various Subjects* (1742–48), column 21.

⁶¹ M. A. Denham, *A Collection of Proverbs and Popular Sayings Relating to the Seasons, the Weather, and Agricultural Pursuits; Gathered Chiefly from Oral Tradition* (London, 1846), p. 63 footnote.

⁶² John Florio in his dictionary *Queen Anna's World of Words* (London, 1611) defines *Beffana* as 'A bug-beare, a scarecrow, a mockbegger, a toy to mocke an ape'; in his *Vocabolario Italiano e Inglese* (London, 1659) the same definition occurs in reverse order. *Beffana* is related to the verb *beffare*, 'to flout, to mock, to frump, to deride, to jest at, to slight', not to

Denham later reinstated all of Scot's phantoms, adding many more items, to a total of almost two hundred, for rhetorical effect; this list included, of course, Scot's bull-beggars along with Denham's own mock-beggars, but this is no evidence that the former were still known in contemporary oral tradition.⁶³ Fairy dictionaries have continued the list-mania, now in a much more appreciative tone.

Etymological and Lexicographical Accounts

We have examined some instances in which authors played upon the word 'bull-begger' by taking their clues from the two elements, 'bull', and 'begger', of which it was apparently compounded. When Samuel Johnson published the first edition of his dictionary, he quoted the passage from Ayliffe's *Parergon* that we have examined above as an anti-Papist instance of the word 'Bull-beggar'. In addition, he also adopted Ayliffe's etymology: 'This word probably came from the insolence of those who begged, or raised money by the pope's bull'.⁶⁴ In the shortened version of 1755, he wisely dropped this explanation.

An etymological interest in the word was reflected as early as the seventeenth century in Stephen Skinner's *An Etymologicon of the English Tongue* (1669). Taking the compound literally, Skinner entered into the spirit of child-scaring by proposing that it referred to some ogre demanding bulls, in order to swallow them whole!⁶⁵ Besides his own fanciful conjecture, he also noted the suggestion of his assistant Thomas Henshaw, who 'ingeniose, ut solet, dictum putat quasi *Bold-Begger*'; a suggestion that recurred in Skinner's *Gazophylacum anglicanum* (1689) and in his *New English Dictionary* (1691), where Skinner's own etymology was wisely omitted: 'Dr. Th. H. thinks it ingeniously so called, *quasi Bold beggar*, one that will not be denied'. This suggestion found support in Nathan Bailey's popular *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (first ed. 1721) and his *Dictionary Britannicum* (first ed. 1730), which were reprinted throughout the

impaurire or *spaventare*, 'to scare, see to affright'. Florio seems to be unique in associating 'mockbegger' with fright (see *OED* art. *Mock-beggar*).

⁶³ 'Folklore, or Manners and Customs, of the North of England'; chapter VIII in James Hardy, ed., *The Denham Tracts: A Collection of Folklore by Michael Aislabie Denham*, 2 vols. (London, 1892-95), 2:77-80.

⁶⁴ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd ed. (London, 1755), art. 'Bull-beggar'.

⁶⁵ 'qui tauros petit, quos uno tractu integros deglutiat, v. *Bull & Begger*'.

eighteenth century, as well as in William Toone's *Glossary*, first published in 1832. But Robert Nares in his own *Glossary*, first published 1822, judged: 'The etymology is very uncertain. *Bold beggar*, which Skinner mentions, is not quite satisfactory'.⁶⁶

Such dissatisfaction may have been sown by etymologists pointing out the Celtic origins of 'boggle-boe', another child-scaring word.⁶⁷ Some of these suggested that 'bull-beggar' came from the same stock: William Stukeley in 1724 claimed that 'a *bull-beggar* or *boggleboe* is manifestly the *british bwbach* with all its synonymes'; over a century later, R. T. Hampson related 'bull-beggar' to *Bugul* and *Boggart*, because it 'has nearly both sounds'.⁶⁸ Hensleigh Wedgwood imaginatively conjectured in the first edition of his etymological dictionary that the word was '[c]orrupted from W. *bwbach*, Du. *bulle-bak*, a bug-bear, by confusion with *mock-beggar*, a scare-crow, bug-bear (*mock-clown* in the same sense).—Florio', and that 'the former part of the word arises from Pl[att] D[utsch] *bullern*, Du[tch] *bulderen*, G[erman] *poltern*, to make a loud noise . . . as loud noise affects a child with terror, *buller* is used as signifying terrible, dangerous'.⁶⁹ A. Smythe Palmer repeated Wedgwood's first hypothesis in his dictionary of 'folk etymology'.⁷⁰ The revised version of Wedgwood's dictionary (London, 1872) claimed that the word's first syllable 'signifies the roaring noise made to terrify the child by the person who represents the hobgoblin', whereas the final element 'seems a corrupt repetition of the syllable *bug*, signifying roaring, and thence terror'. Charles Mackay in 1877 gave a quite different derivation from Gaelic: '*Buille*, to strike; *bagaire*, beggar, a man with the bag, *i.e.* a violent beggar, who used menaces'.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Robert Nares, *A Glossary; Or, Collection of Words, Phrases, Names, and Allusions to Customs, Proverbs, etc. Which Have Been Thought to Require Illustration in the Works of English Authors, Particularly Shakespeare, and His Contemporaries* (London, 1822; 2nd ed. 1859), p. 118.

⁶⁷ Bailey, *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (see above, n. 29) and *Dictionarium Britannicum* (London, 1730?); Edward Lye's additions to Francis Junius's *Etymologicum Anglicanum* (London, 1743), art. 'Boggle-boe' and 'Bogil'; John Walters, *An English-Welch Dictionary* (London, 1794), art. 'Bóggle-boe' and 'Bug, or bug-bear'.

⁶⁸ William Stukeley, *Itinerarium Curiosum. Or, an Account of the Antiquities and Remarkable Curiositys in Nature or Art, Observ'd in Travels thro' Great Brittan* . . . (London, 1724), p. 56; R. T. Hampson, *Medii Aevi Kalendarium Vi: Or Dates, Charters, And Customs of the Middle Ages, with Kalendars from the Tenth to the Fifteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London, 1841), 2:128–29.

⁶⁹ Hensleigh Wedgwood, *A Dictionary of English Etymology* (New York and Boston, 1859–62), art. 'Bullbeggar'. For the reference to Florio, see my note 62.

⁷⁰ *Folk Etymology: a Dictionary of Verbal Corruptions, or Words Perverted in Form or Meaning by False Derivation or Mistaken Analogy* (London, 1882).

⁷¹ Charles Mackay, *The Gaelic Etymology of the Languages of Western Europe* (London, 1877), p. 61.

These hypotheses are untenable for lack of support in the earliest instances of the word 'bull-begger', or in later instances for that matter, and the same goes for even more creative suggestions made during the nineteenth century.⁷² Etymological analysis of the word amounted to no more than inspired guess-work. James Murray summed up the situation as follows:

As the obvious combination *bull* + *beggar* does not appear to yield a suitable sense, it is generally assumed that there must have been some alteration under the influence of 'popular etymology', e.g. that it is a (further) alteration of *bull-bear*; or that the second element has been altered from *boggard*, *buggart*, 'bogle'. But evidence is entirely wanting.⁷³

And there the case rests. What is evident is that the bull-begger has managed to defeat the attempts of etymologists throughout three centuries to reduce it to its original features; on the one hand because its evocative name has made it an etymological free-for-all; on the other hand because it is supposed to be a product of 'alterations' which, taking place in the oral world, have escaped the grasp of literary documentation.

Where authors of etymological dictionaries failed to run the bull-begger to earth, one would expect regular lexicographers (who might be the same individuals in a different pursuit) to be more successful in recording its semantic features as they found them in contemporary usage. But these dictionaries show a persistent failure or refusal to descend into detail.

The earliest discussions of the word in English dictionaries, those by Skinner and Henshaw, defined *Bull-begger* merely by translation as 'Larva, Manducus, Terriculamentum, μορμολύκειον', words from the classical languages and mythologies, which the authors probably borrowed from Higin's *The Nomenclator*. Known exclusively through literary sources, such words could correspond only approximately to English oral traditions.⁷⁴ Nathan Bailey's *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* of 1724 defined 'Bull-begger' simply as 'a Terrifier of Children'; his *Dictionarium Britannicum* of 1730 put it slightly more floridly: 'a terriculament to frighten forward children'. B. N. Defoe's *A Compleat English Dictionary* of 1735 had 'an imaginary Thing to fright Children', echoed by Thomas

⁷² John Thomson, *Etymons of English Words* (Edinburgh, 1826), art. 'Bull-begger'; James Hooper, "'Tom", "Bull", "Dog", and "Jack"', *All the Year Round* 25:601 (June 5, 1880), 89–92; Robert C. Nightingale, 'The Waking of the Birds', *The Living Age* 219:2833 (October 22, 1898), 255–60.

⁷³ *NED* and *OED*, art. 'bull-begger'.

⁷⁴ *Manducus*, 'devourer', may have been inspired by Skinner's conjecture that bull-beggars swallowed bulls entire.

Dyche's *A New General English Dictionary* as 'any thing to frighten persons or children with, that has no real being' (third edition, 1740). Samuel Johnson in the first instance printed 'Something terrible; something to fright children with', which in the later version of his dictionary he reduced to 'Something terrible'.⁷⁵ John Ash in 1795 defined the word as 'Something terrible, something to frighten children', a definition copied almost literally by Charles Mackay.⁷⁶ Robert Nares in 1822 defined it as 'A kind of hobgoblin... Used generally, even to a late period, for any terrifying object' (quoted from the 1859 edition); Halliwell (1847) proffered 'A hobgoblin; any object of terror'. Such lack of specificity may well be directly related to the lack of etymological clarity we have observed; without a reliable etymological base, lexicographers apparently decided to tread carefully.

Besides or instead of a vague description, some lexicographers chose to define by cross-reference. *A New Dictionary... of the Canting Crew*, (by B. E., c. 1690), defined *Rawhead and Bloody-bones* as 'a Bull-begger or Scare-child'; an equation that seems rather askew, for 'Scare-child' has the look of a general term, comparable to Scot's 'bug' and Skinner's 'terriculamentum', of which both 'Rawhead and Bloody-bones' and 'Bull-begger' would be particular instances. A cavalier attitude towards semantic distinctions and hierarchies was characteristic of lists like Scot's, as we have seen; but unfortunately dictionaries have tended to display a similar lack of precision. During the eighteenth century, confusing cross-references, or rather cross-definitions, continued to appear and to multiply. Robert Ainsworth's dictionary of 1773 *art.* 'A bull beggar' referred the reader to 'Bugbear', which in its turn was defined as 'Terriculamentum, larva'. Francis Grose's dictionary (1785) coupled 'Bull Beggar' with a hitherto unrecorded alternative form 'Bully Beggar' to mean 'An imaginary being with which children are threatened by servants and nurses, like raw head and bloody bones'.⁷⁷ Conversely, Grose defined 'Raw Head and Bloody Bones' as 'A bull-beggar, or scare-child, with which foolish nurses terrify crying brats'. In the second edition (1788), he added the word 'Bugaboo', defined

⁷⁵ Johnson, *Dictionary* (see above, n. 64); *idem*, shortened ed. (London, 1756).

⁷⁶ John Ash, *The New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language... To Which Is Prefixed, a Comprehensive Grammar* (London, 1775); Charles MacKay, *The Gaelic Etymology of the Languages of Western Europe and More Especially of the English and Lowland Scotch, and of Their Slang, Cant, and Colloquial Dialects* (London, 1877).

⁷⁷ Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, 2nd ed. (London, 1788). The same items recurred in James Caulfield, *Blackguardiana* (London, 1793?), and in *Lexicon Balatronicum* (London, 1811), a pseudonymous edition of Grose's compilations.

as 'A scare-babe, or bully-beggar', which did not make matters clearer. To Grose as to Scot and Harsnett, the various words were evidently all alike, and efforts to distinguish between them a waste of scholarship.

Nineteenth-century lexicographers, including Nares and Halliwell, mentioned above, tended to resort to the same device in combination with a very general definition. They probably could not have offered any further detail had they wished to, for as the word was becoming obsolete, they were reduced to copying literary sources from the past, usually other dictionaries. Even the *New English Dictionary*, instead of defining 'Bull-beggar', merely referred the reader to the preceding item 'Bull-bear': 'A spectre, boggy; a scare-crow; a bugbear, or object of groundless terror'. Both items passed unchanged into the *Oxford English Dictionary* in its printed and digital forms.

A Scary Nothing

If an as yet uncatalogued early modern text itemizing all the bull-begger's features is discovered tomorrow, the fact will remain that informants show a general reluctance or impotence to be informative about that phantom. In its unrecorded prehistory the word may have stood for something or somebody concrete or well-defined, but literature did nothing to document that concrete origin for posterity; authors of various literary works in early modern England remained vague or contradictory or simply unreliable about the features of the bull-beggars to which they referred.

Various authors, or groups of authors, appear to have had various reasons for their lack of specificity. Those who used the word for polemical purposes often did so in a satirical vein, which favoured punning and other witty verbal manipulation, while authors of plays and other fictions adapted its meaning to their artistic intentions; in both cases, the signified's features may be idiosyncratic or mutually contradictory. But authors of texts that one would expect to be more straightforward, viz. autobiographical and lexicographical ones, also shied away from specificity. Individual autobiographical references tended to use a jocular approach; collective testimonies, or what passed for them, were steeped in disapproval and disinterest in the phenomenon they described. While scholarly etymologists got bogged down in disagreement, regular lexicographers shrouded their definitions in generalities or question-begging cross-reference.

We have found this lack of specific detail prevalent among early modern authors of whatever persuasion or period. In the seventeenth century

superstitious fears were something to be ashamed of, or to shame others with; a self-respecting scholar would have as little to do with them as possible. When in the eighteenth century child-rearing was made an object of rationalist and sentimentalist concern, threatening figures became a mark of bad pedagogy, and therefore undesirable for scholars to meddle with. Throughout the early modern period therefore, familiarity with bull-beggars was something to be repudiated or made light of. In this respect the concept can be compared to 'our mothers maids', reviled by Scot and Pluche alike: once having outgrown them, a gentleman's reputation could only be damaged by showing undue familiarity with them.

Making allowances for our informants' uncommunicativeness, it is nevertheless clear that by the middle of the seventeenth century, the word 'bull-begger' had become a mere nursery scare-word, of undefined and unstable semantic content. Not only was the spectre used as an empty threat; the word itself could be almost empty of meaning. The terrifying magic of names is illustrated by a mock-almanac for 1663, which facetiously offered its users 'a Bug-bear Name or two in every Moneth, to still the Children when they cry, and conjure them quiet': evocative names like 'Raw-head and Bloody-bones', 'All-head-no-body, or Hopidiboody' (March) and '*Fee-fa-fum* the Giant' (October), presented without any further description.⁷⁸ 'Bull-begger' seems even less circumscribed than these, depending on mere suggestiveness for its effect. In the nursery, individual adults could fill in its nebulous outline with whatever features they chose to associate with 'bull' and 'begger'.⁷⁹ We might therefore categorize it as a 'floating signifier', a word meaning different things to different people at different occasions.⁸⁰ But 'empty signifier' would also be an appropriate term, for as testified by the dictionaries we have consulted, the meaning of 'bull-begger' came to reside in its use rather than in its content. As John Widdowson said about modern child-frighteners:

What do we mean by *bogey*, *bogey man*, *boo man* and the like? Fundamentally, we simply mean 'something frightening,' and the precise significance

⁷⁸ Anonymous, *Endymion, 1663, or The Man-in-the-Moon His Northern Weather-Glass*... (London, 1663). The phrase quoted occurs at sig. A4r, the names feature in the calendars for March and October.

⁷⁹ For an example of the range that individual imaginations might cover, see the instances of 'boo-bagger' listed by Widdowson, *If You Don't Be Good* (see above, n. 31), pp. 165–70.

⁸⁰ Coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss, this phrase has become popular amongst post-modern Freudians, but I have no space left to analyze the bull-begger's frightening effect from their angle.

of each figure is often irrelevant. What is important is that the figure represents a fearsome and unknown entity, a purportedly alien and uncontrollable creature beyond the bounds of normal existence.⁸¹

'Bull-begger' became, or perhaps always was, an empty scare-word, a scary nothing.⁸² Just speaking it, without any further detail, could have been a fiendishly effective threat: it left the child to invest the emptiness of that name with its own nameless fears, 'shapeless and vast as the spirit of God that brooded on the waters'.⁸³

⁸¹ Widdowson, *If You Don't Be Good* (see above, n. 31), p. 34.

⁸² In Saussurean terms: the signified is nothing but the signifier itself.

⁸³ A. L. Rowse, *A Cornish Childhood* (London, 1942; repr. 1962), p. 96, speaking about the 'bogey'.

SHAGGIE THIGHS AND AERY FORMES:
SATYRES AND FAERIES IN BEN JONSON'S *OVERON*

Helen Wilcox

On New Year's Day, 1611, King James VI of Scotland and I of England attended the performance of a masque in the Banqueting House of his court at Whitehall.¹ Entitled *Oberon, The Faery Prince*, the masque was the result of collaborative work by some of the greatest creative artists in England at the time. Its text was written by Ben Jonson; its songs were set to music by Ferrabosco; it was performed in costumes and on stage sets designed by Inigo Jones; its speaking parts were played by members of Shakespeare's company, the King's Men; its lively action included ballets devised by choreographers Confesse, Giles and Herne, and it concluded with courtly dances to the music of Robert Johnson.² The patron and central figure of this glittering event was James's elder son, Henry, who had been invested (at the Palace of Westminster) as Prince of Wales just six months earlier. Henry's political coming-of-age had been celebrated throughout 1610, and the festivities may be seen as reaching their completion with this new-year masque for 1611. The title page of *Oberon* in Jonson's folio *Workes* (1616) announces it as 'A Masque of Prince Henries', indicating the young prince's symbolic ownership of the work, and indeed

¹ The subject of this essay has been chosen with Alasdair MacDonald firmly in mind: the masque took place exactly four hundred years before his retirement, concerns the Scottish royal family, was written by an author whom he greatly respects, and is of significance for its political references, dramatic form, poetic rhetoric and musical settings, all of which are known to be areas of interest to Alasdair. The essay is dedicated to him with grateful affection.

² See Ben Jonson, [*Works*], ed. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford, 1925–52), 7:341–56 and 10:518–25; Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965); Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, 2 vols. (London, 1973); Andrew J. Sabol, ed., *Four Hundred Songs and Dances from the Stuart Masque* (Providence, RI, 1978); Mary Chan, *Music in the Theatre of Ben Jonson* (Oxford, 1980); Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Baltimore, 1983); David Lindley, ed., *The Court Masque* (Manchester, 1984); Peter Walls, *Music in the English Courtly Masque, 1604–1640* (Oxford, 1996); David Bevington and Peter Holbrook, eds., *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque* (Cambridge, 1998); Barbara Ravelhofer, *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume, and Music* (Oxford, 2006) and Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge, 2008).

on 1st January 1611 it was Henry himself who played the title role of the 'Faery Prince'.

Why was Oberon considered an appropriate subject for this significant political and cultural event? What is the relationship between the 1611 masque and the idea of supernatural beings, and in what ways does Jonson change both the genre and the 'faery' tradition? This essay will look closely at the masque itself in context, in order to answer these and related questions. It will also take the opportunity to celebrate the unique achievements of this early modern dramatic, musical and visual spectacle, a 'minor masterpiece'³ in which a variety of skills and senses combined to form what Shakespeare might aptly have described as 'something rich and strange'.⁴

By 1611 the masque, a richly expressive yet strangely hybrid art form, was a well-established mode of British court entertainment and political allegory.⁵ The baptism of Prince Henry in 1594 had itself been celebrated with masques at the Scottish court, and James's reign in England from 1603 onwards had already given rise to at least a dozen new masques, mainly written by Jonson but also including works by Thomas Campion and Samuel Daniel.⁶ The ingredients of a masque are lavish visual effects, poetic dialogue, songs, instrumental music and dance, combined for the purposes of display, propaganda and celebration. The masque form also importantly bridges the gap between performers and spectators by incorporating members of the royal family and their court in symbolic roles and dances. By 1611 the masque had grown into a dramatic art which played on this complex mirroring between stage and audience, as well as between mythology and actuality. A similar duality of principle also underlies the two-part formal structure of Jacobean masques, with an antimasque preceding the main action and thereby prefiguring, in distorted or parodic mode, the content of the masque proper. This courtly entertainment allows little scope for doubt or ambiguity; threats of disruption embodied in the first part of the action are symbolically contained by, or banished from, the resolution of the second part. Chaos cedes to order; night gives way to day, and the hierarchies of court and state are reasserted.

³ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque* (see above, n. 2), p. 188.

⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (1611), ed. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (Walton-on-Thames, 1999), 1.2.402.

⁵ See the recent discussions by Ravelhofer, *Early Stuart Masque* (see above, n. 2), and Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*.

⁶ For a complete list of masques performed at the Jacobean court, see Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, pp. 358–76.

True to Renaissance cultural practice, masques draw upon existing narratives for their material, appropriating archetypal figures from mythological or allegorical tradition. Jonson's masque for 1st January 1611 is no exception. The eponymous hero, Oberon, would already have been familiar from Germanic and French sources, including his precursors Alberich, king of the elves, and the hero of *Huon de Bordeaux*, a French romance translated into English in the mid-sixteenth century.⁷ *Huon* formed the basis of a now lost play performed by the Earl of Essex's Men in 1593–94, and a new edition of the English version of the romance had been published as recently as 1601.⁸ There are at least two other British precedents for Jonson's choice of Oberon: he appears as a major character in Robert Greene's 1590 play, *The Scottish Historie of James the Fourth*, and most famously in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, published in quarto in 1600 but probably written four or five years earlier. Some common features emerge from these predecessors. Oberon is a figure of authority—a king, a prince—but his kingdom is a supernatural realm and his subjects are fairies or elves. He is thus associated mainly with the positive aspects of power, or at least with comic or magical resolutions rather than tragic conclusions. While the main title of Greene's play (published in 1592) suggests the harsh realities of history—*The Scottish Historie of James the Fourth, slaine at Flodden*—the subtitle confirms Oberon's more cheerful role at the head of an alternative kingdom: *Entermixed with a pleasant Comedie, presented by Oboram, King of Fayeries*.⁹ Shakespeare's Oberon is depicted as the ruler of a troubled realm in which he is temporarily at odds with his queen, Titania; he will not tolerate her independence and unfairly wins an Indian boy from her by trapping her into a humiliating liaison with Bottom the Weaver 'translated' into an ass.¹⁰ However, this Oberon does show compassion for the suffering Athenian lovers, and goes out of his way to ensure a happy ending, in which they 'May all to Athens back again repair, / And think no more of this night's accidents / But as the fierce vexation of a dream' (4.1.64–66). Oberon's world is that of dreams: familiar yet strange, and disturbing even while capable of achieving magical transformations.

⁷ *The Boke of Duke Huon of Burdeux*, trans. Lord Berners (1534), ed. S. L. Lee, Early English Text Society, extra series 40, 41 (London, 1883).

⁸ Part of the 1601 edition is reprinted in Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (London, 1975), 1:391.

⁹ Robert Greene, *The Scottish Historie of James the Fourth* (London, 1592), title-page.

¹⁰ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Cambridge, 2003), 3.1.98.

Jonson's masque *Oberon* is built upon a comparable principle of transformation. This is most evident in the scenery devised by Inigo Jones, for which designs survive and full descriptions are provided in Jonson's text. In the opening scene, during which several satyrs emerge with the moon and make 'antique action, and gestures',¹¹ the set takes the form of 'nothing ... but a darke Rocke, with trees beyond it; and all wildnesse, that could be presented' (lines 2–3). This is an appropriate environment for the expected antimasque, dominated by the 'wildnesse' of uncontrolled nature, brilliantly conveyed in the craggy forms created by Jones's scenery.¹² The effect upon those present on New Year's Day, 1611, was memorable, as suggested in the extant eye-witness account of William Trumbull. He refers to the 'great rock' and the palpably nocturnal atmosphere: 'the moon' was 'showing above through an aperture, so that its progress through the night could be observed'.¹³ Jones's visual emblems of disorder (the rocky cliff) and unpredictability (the shifting moon) are soon transformed into an image of ordered architectural symmetry: as the satyrs approach the sylvans guarding Oberon's palace, the rocky set opens to reveal the front of the building in its regal splendour.¹⁴ In the vocabulary of the early seventeenth century, this is not a scene change but a 'discovery', a process of uncovering or showing forth what has been present all along.¹⁵ As Jonson describes the moment, 'There the whole Scene opened, and within was discover'd the Frontispice of a bright and glorious Palace, whose gates and walls were transparent' (lines 138–40). This fabulous second set is yet superseded by a third,¹⁶ in which the 'whole palace' is fully opened and a '*nation of Faies*' are also 'discover'd' (lines 291–92). Deeper within the palace, the fairy knights are seen 'farre off in perspectiue' and finally, 'at the further end of all', Oberon himself is visible 'in a chariot' (lines 291–95).

¹¹ Ben Jonson, *Oberon, The Faery Prince*, in Ben Jonson, [Works], ed. Herford and Simpson (see above, n. 2), 7:342, lines 30–31. All further references are to this edition and are supplied in the main text by line number.

¹² Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones* (see above, n. 2), 1:200–01, plate 60.

¹³ William Trumbull papers, *H.M.C. Downshire Manuscripts* (1938), 3.1–2, cited in Ben Jonson, [Works], ed. Herford and Simpson, 10:522–23. All further references are to the Herford and Simpson text and are supplied in the main text by page number. Trumbull is thought to have been a member of the Spanish embassy (Butler, *Stuart Court Masque* [see above, n. 2], p. 191).

¹⁴ Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones*, 1:216–17, plate 63. This design is labelled number 2, identifying the scene, and the inscription refers to 'Oberons Pallace'.

¹⁵ To 'disclose or expose to view (anything covered up, hidden, or previously unseen), to reveal, show' (*OED*, 'discover', 3a).

¹⁶ Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones* (see above, n. 2), 1:214–5, plate 62; the design shows the detail of decoration and perspective required for the third scene.

The dramatic effect of this carefully staged spectacle evidently amazed the assembled company at Whitehall: Trumbull noted that 'the rock opened discovering a great throne with countless lights and colours all shifting, a lovely thing to see' (p. 522). Only after this transformation of rugged rocks into dignified external architecture and decorative inner splendour is Oberon himself permitted to appear and move forward in his chariot to the centre of the stage.

By contrast with the complex and ingenious settings in which it takes place, the action of *Oberon* is relatively straightforward. There are three phases to its plot (to honour it with a grander term than it perhaps warrants), each matching one of the three set designs by Jones. First, the audience witnesses the gathering of the satyrs 'running forth seuerally, from diuers parts of the Rocke' (lines 29–30) to revel by moonlight, though scolded and instructed by their sympathetic 'Praefect', Silenus (lines 32–33). In the second phase, having heard Silenus speak admiringly of prince Oberon, the satyrs approach the walls of his palace, only to find that they are too early and that the building is being guarded by two sleeping Sylvans 'armed with their clubs' (line 141). Third, once the cock has crowed and the time is right, the palace opens and the fairy prince emerges with his entourage. The satyrs, sylvans, fays, elves, fairy knights and Oberon himself present their dignified homage to King James, until 'The Herald of the day, / Bright Phosphorus' (lines 434–35) sends them away and the masque ends. It is highly significant that the satyrs are still on the stage at this point. They are able to 'expresse their joy' at the 'solemnitie' of Oberon's arrival by chariot (lines 314–16) and are only dismissed from the stage at the very end of the action when all the supernatural beings, including Oberon, are invited to go 'To rest, to rest' (line 434). Although the opening of the masque appears to be a typical antimasque, the satyrs who embody the rebellious elements in the world of *Oberon* are not excluded from the main action but are absorbed into it—just as the opening scenery is not replaced by something completely different but opens up to 'discover' the grand fairy palace within its rocky structure. In *Oberon* the transformation from chaos to order is a gradual evolution, not a contrast of extremes, and this represents a significant alteration to the conventional structure of the masque.¹⁷ In place of the opposition of antimasque and masque, Jonson presents a more continuous and even

¹⁷ Martin Butler aptly refers to this significant change as a 'gradual disclosure' rather than a 'simple opposition' (*Stuart Court Masque* [see above, n. 2], p. 193).

inclusive vision that has consequences both for the role of the supernatural beings in the masque and for its political allegory.

Bearing in mind the relative brevity of Jonson's text for *Oberon*, an unexpectedly wide range of supernatural beings is represented in the masque. At the earthiest end of the spectrum are the satyrs, who are variously referred to as 'wanton' (line 89), drunken (with brains 'touch'd' by the 'tankard' [line 17]) and forever seeking pranks: 'Shall wee steale away their beards?' asks the fourth satyr with reference to the sleeping sylvans (line 191). As their longing to 'beguile the girles' (line 85) and the outspokenness of their song to the moon (lines 262–76) suggest, the satyrs' sexual desires are barely under control. Further, they express violence in the behaviour they threaten (though never carry out), including a hideous fantasy of boring through the sylvans' eyes with 'red-hot' stakes (line 228), and there are hints of the devil in their physiognomy. Drawing on the tradition of Euripides, Virgil and other classical authors to whom Jonson regularly refers in his own annotations to the text, their dialogue makes reference to 'clouen feet' (line 102), 'crooked legges' (line 106), 'stubbed hornes' (line 113), 'pricking eares' (line 118) and a 'tayle' which can tickle a sylvan's nose (line 183). As Inigo Jones's sketches for their costumes make clear,¹⁸ these rough figures were most notable in visual terms for their hairiness. When describing the dance that they will perform when they have transferred their allegiance from Bacchus to Oberon, the second satyr promises that they will,

to answeare all things els,
Trap our shaggie thighs with bels;
That as we do strike a time,
In our daunce, shall make a chime (lines 121–24)¹⁹

Even as the uncouth nature of the satyrs is epitomised in the phrase 'shaggie thighs', this roughness is already being mellowed in the anticipation of a dance which is not disordered or discordant but will keep time and 'make a chime'. This resonant word suggests harmony and shared pur-

¹⁸ Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones* (see above, n. 2), 1:221, plate 65.

¹⁹ The dance of the satyrs, a 'gallimaufry of gambols', was famously imported into Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, performed later in 1611. When the dancers, mistakenly introduced as 'Saltiers', present themselves at the sheep-shearing feast, it is said that they have 'made themselves all men of hair', and several of them, 'by their own report', have 'danced before the king' (*The Winter's Tale*, ed. J. H. P. Pafford [London, 1963], 4.4.327–29, 337–38). For other links between *Oberon* and *The Winter's Tale*, see note 38 below. For a discussion of the culture of borrowing among early seventeenth-century dramatists, see Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson: Authority: Criticism* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 149.

pose, as in the closing lines of George Herbert's poem 'Deniall' in which the speaker's prayerful relationship with God is dramatically restored:

That so thy favours granting my request,
They and my minde may chime,
And mend my ryme.²⁰

Although it would be wrong to suggest that the satyrs in *Oberon* are reformed and turned into obedient or devoted servants, the vocabulary of chiming—even if the chimes they make are expected to be 'Lowder, then the rattling pipes / Of the wood-gods' (lines 126–27)—is indicative of the ways in which the satyrs are gradually softened and eventually brought into line, rather than rejected as irredeemable creatures of darkness.²¹ Jonson here reforms both the traditional opposition of the antimasque and masque,²² and the sharper contrasts between types of mythological or supernatural beings. This short masque is populated by a range of non-human characters whose distinctions become less and less clear as the action develops. On seeing the sylvans lying 'asleepe' before the gates of Oberon's palace, the satyrs stand '*wondering*' at these figures '*armed with their clubs, and drest in leaues*' (lines 141–42). As protectors of the fairy prince's palace, these creatures are higher up the supernatural pecking-order, but their clubs, leafy clothing and supine position (as well as their name with its woody associations) indicate an affinity to the ground rather than the air. Silenus, leader of the satyrs and reputed '*Paedagoge of Bacchus*' (as Jonson's gloss on line 9 informs us), is actually given authority over the sylvans when they have been woken from sleeping on the job. In verse heavy with irony, Silenus rebukes them:

How now, *Syluanes*! can you wake?
I commend the care you take
I' your watch. Is this your guise
To haue both your eares, and eyes

²⁰ *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge, 2007), p. 289.

²¹ There is disagreement among critics over the artistic integrity of *Oberon*. For example, Jonathan Goldberg considers the fact that the satyrs are not condemned during the masque to be a sign of the work's unresolved contradictions, whereas Martin Butler regards this judgement by Goldberg as the result of 'misleadingly rigid expectations' of the masque form. See Goldberg, *James I* (see above, n. 2), pp. 123–24, and Butler, *Stuart Court Masque* (see above, n. 2), pp. 192–93.

²² Leah Marcus notes that the 'satiric potential' of the antimasque is 'not particularly visible' in *Oberon*. See her 'Jonson and the Court', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, ed. Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge, 2000), p. 35.

Seal'd so fast; as these mine *Elues*
Might haue stolne you, from your selues? (lines 220–25)

Here the satyrs have the upper hand—and, briefly, the moral superiority—over part of Oberon's train, and the vocabulary shifts to indicate this: the lowliest creatures have become 'mine *Elues*', the cheeky childlike woodland beings who generally share the mischief of the satyrs but not their animal characteristics. There is here a remarkable shifting of boundaries between satyrs, sylvans and elves, by which all these beings are liable to be 'stolne' from their own familiar 'selues'. As the satyrs later admit,

Though our forms be rough, & rude,
Yet our acts may be endew'd
With more virtue. (lines 278–80)

It is no coincidence that these words promising reform are sung by the satyrs immediately before the appearance of Oberon, at whose presence the earth is then commanded to 'melt to sea' (line 300). The power of royalty is apparently so great that it can cause the conventional boundaries between elements, and among the more earthly of supernatural beings, to vanish.

The company kept by Oberon in his palace is identified as 'fairies' or 'faies', and these are certainly spirits of a higher order than satyrs, sylvans and elves. The *OED* cites 'fay' as an equivalent of 'fairy'—that is, a supernatural being who, though 'of diminutive size', is assumed to possess 'magical powers' and to exert 'great influence for good or evil' in the affairs of human beings.²³ These powers are not assigned to the satyrs, and the superiority of the fairies is emphasised in physical difference: the dancing fays in *Oberon* are described as having 'nimble feet' that tread rather more 'subtle circles' (lines 361–62) than the cloven hooves of the leaping satyrs can manage. Similarly, while the satyrs speak in shorter lines of verse, mainly trochaic, a more dignified iambic pentameter becomes the norm for the fairies' songs and dialogue. Ferrabosco's extant settings of two songs from this point in the masque also highlight the differences between the mythological beings. Those with clay-like feet and 'knottie legs' (line 403) are given word-settings with a somewhat plodding harmonic movement, while the airy quality of the fairies is aptly suggested by

²³ *OED*, 'fairy' 4a. For a well-known medieval usage of 'fay', compare Morgan le Fay who, like Oberon, played her part in Arthurian mythology.

their more expressive and mellifluous melodies.²⁴ Inigo Jones's costume designs for the fays confirm that these are the aristocracy of supernatural beings worthy of accompanying the fairy prince himself.²⁵ In the song, 'Nay, nay, you must not stay', the fays are referred to as sensitive spirits, akin to 'the ayre of which you are' (line 406) and quite unlike the 'countrey *Faery* / That doth haunt the harth, or dairy' (lines 418–19). Even within the ranks of fairies, it seems, there are distinctions between 'course' country spirits and their 'high-grac'd' royals (lines 418, 427), akin to the contrasts between the homely Puck and regal Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In view of these hierarchical relationships, the egalitarianism in the speech of the 'formost Syluane' (lines 316–17) is striking and unexpected. When he invites the assembled company of creatures to sing, he commands: 'Stand forth, bright *Faies*, and *Elues*, and tune your layes' (line 360). In one breath he is urging the airy fays and earthy elves (the term used earlier by Silenus for the satyrs) to make music together. Even etymology is used in support of the merging of fairy ranks: Jonson himself points out that the word 'faery' appears to derive from the Greek 'feras', meaning 'satyr'.²⁶

The political symbolism of this easy mingling of satyrs and fairies would not have been lost on the audience of Jonson's masque. As William Trumbull observed, the 'very large curtain' which hung in front of the set before the performance began was 'painted with the kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland, with the legend above *Separata locis concordi pace figantur*'.²⁷ Just as the factions and orders of the fairy world are brought together in harmony in the course of the masque, so (the performance and its setting proclaim) the three geographically-separate kingdoms are united in peaceful co-existence. The crucial factor in this allegory is the presence of King James at the masque: he and Queen Anna were foremost in the audience (or rather, above it). As Turnbull noted, the hall contained 'a dais at the top for the king and queen', and at the conclusion 'the masqueraders approached the throne to make their reverence to their Majesties' (p. 523). The king to whom they were paying

²⁴ St. Michael's College, Tenbury MS 1018, f. 37v, transcribed by Mary Chan, *Music in the Theatre* (see above, n. 2), pp. 236–37: setting of 'heere bee formes so bright and ayerie / and their motions so they varie / as they will inchaunt the fayerie / if you longer heere shall tarrie' (*Oberon*, lines 429–32).

²⁵ Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones* (see above, n. 2), 1:221, plate 66.

²⁶ Jonson's marginal note to line 65.

²⁷ Trumbull (see above, n. 13), p. 522. The Latin translates as: 'May what is separated in place be joined by harmonious peace'.

homage was addressed by the translators of the Authorised Version of the English Bible (published later in the same year, 1611) as 'the most High and Mightie Prince, James by the grace of God King of Great Britaine, France and Ireland'.²⁸ Although France is oddly overlooked in the representation of the kingdoms on the curtain covering Oberon's palace, the principle is clear: the kingdoms are united in the very person of King James, who from his infancy was king of Scotland and in his maturity succeeded to the throne of England and Ireland. Appropriately, then, the satyrs and other lowly imaginary creatures are not banished from the celebrations but brought together, like the nations,²⁹ in order to pay due reverence to Oberon and, allied with him, to the king.

The text of the masque makes the actual focus of its celebrations abundantly clear. As Oberon's chariot moves forward from his palace to the sound of 'lowd triumphant musique' (lines 295–96), the 'nation of Faies' sing:

Melt earth to sea, sea flow to ayre,
And ayre flie into fire,
Whilst we, in tunes, to ARTHVRS chayre
Beare OBERONS desire;
Then which there nothing can be higher,
Saue JAMES, to whom it flyes:
But he the wonder is of tongues, of eares, of eyes. (lines 300–06)

The hierarchy is unmistakable: Oberon, the prince of the fairies, pays reverence to the 'chayre' or throne of Arthur, the early English king whose prosperous reign was immortalised in the romances of his court and its heroic knights.³⁰ Jonson's masque has been rightly described by Thomas Corns as having a 'chivalric—indeed, Arthurian—aesthetic'.³¹ The rhetor-

²⁸ *The Holy Bible [...] Newly Translated out of the Originall tongues* (London, 1611), dedicatory epistle, sig. A2r.

²⁹ In fact, there were five countries represented in James—England, Scotland, Ireland, France and Wales—but at this stage in its history Wales had been effectively annexed to England and was subsumed under its name. See G. Dyfnallt Owen, *Wales in the Reign of James I* (Woodbridge, 1988), and Maurice Lee, Jr., *Great Britain's Solomon: James VI and I in his Three Kingdoms* (Urbana, Ill., 1990). The phenomenon of Prince Henry himself renders the politics of the occasion fascinating: a Scottish prince with the title of Prince of Wales, he was being presented to an English court.

³⁰ Oberon was 'donor to Arthur of rule in fairyland' (Butler, *Stuart Court Masque* [see above, n. 2], p. 189); this is an exact parallel with Prince Henry's symbolic role as Prince of Wales—the title traditionally given to the heir to the throne—which was to cede authority in Wales to the king of England.

³¹ Thomas N. Corns, ed., *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 5.

ical effect of these echoes of the age of chivalry is to give glory to Arthur's symbolic descendant, the actual king in the audience, who is said to govern by the 'sweetnesse of his sway' and 'not by force' (lines 345–47). Through the persuasive mirroring techniques of the masque, linking persons and characters, spectators and spectacle, Henry honours James even as Oberon honours Arthur.

If King James, the 'wonder' of 'tongues, of eares, of eyes', is the real political focus of the masque, where does this leave Henry, the sixteen-year-old prince who plays the title role and forms the physical and symbolic centre of its action? This was the first occasion on which Henry had fulfilled the function of chief masque in a court entertainment and, in spite of the fact that his purpose is to pay homage to 'ARTHURS crownes, and chayre' (line 368), Oberon comes in for a good deal of praise in his own right. Long before his palace has been 'discovered' in the rocks, Oberon's virtues are expounded by Silenus to the curious satyrs who plague him with questions about the fairy prince. He is presented as a serious leader with distinctly divine attributes: Silenus's assurance that 'he will doe / More, then you can ayme unto' (lines 89–90) recalls St Paul's praise of God as one who is 'able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think' (Ephes. 3.20). Silenus suggests that the prince is the epitome of all that is good:

Satyres, he doth fill with grace,
Every season, ev'ry place;
Beautie dwels, but in his face:
He's the height of all our race. (lines 62–65)

The young prince is described by the satyr in terms generally reserved for Christ—grace, beauty, pre-eminence—although the 'race' immediately referred to is not humankind as redeemed by Christ but all the supernatural beings gathered together at his court and raised to virtue in the course of the masque. Once again there is an implicit reference to the unity of the satyrs, sylvans, elves, fairies and fays in the person of Oberon—'he is the height of *all* our race'—just as it is claimed that the kingdoms and races of Great Britain and Ireland are united in James. The masque is not only a presentation of Henry as Oberon to the court, but also a representation of the ideology of peace and political unity for the foreseeable future.

Oberon's title, the 'Faery Prince', is also of enormous political and religious significance, with its echoes of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and the memory of Elizabethan England in its triumphant defiance of Catholicism.

A noble past—the period of ‘Gloriana’—is evoked by the moon-lit setting³² and the descriptions of Oberon and his courtiers, who are seen as inheritors and sustainers of that ‘fairy-tale’ history and its socio-political priorities. When the palace is first made visible, Silenus tells the satyrs of its significance:

Looke! Do's not his *Palace* show
 Like another *Skie* of lights?
 Yonder, with him, live the knights,
 Once, the noblest of the earth,
 Quick'ned by a second birth;
 Who for prowess, and for truth,
 There are crownd with lasting youth:
 And do hold, by *Fates* command,
 Seats of blisse in *Fairie* land. (lines 143–51)

Oberon is here portrayed as the chief of a whole generation of knights who, renowned in the past as ‘the noblest of the earth’, are now being restored to their former status as emblems of ‘prowesse’ and ‘truth’. As Martin Butler puts it, Prince Henry becomes the ‘returning champion of heroic renewal’.³³ The masque’s reference to the prince’s youthful entourage, as well as to the new knights created by James and Henry in the early years of the seventeenth century, is unmistakeable. The implication that the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland constitute a land of ‘blisse’ is also fundamental to the congratulatory tone of the piece: the current state of this noble ‘*Fairie* land’ is to be honoured and maintained. The ostensible purpose of the masque (and of the rites paid to James within it) is a petition on behalf of Oberon and his renewed fairy knights, that they will be ‘sustayn’d in forme, fame, and felicitie’ (line 333) in the years to come. In this way, the masque manages to honour James while at the same time giving a glimpse of the past under Elizabeth and the hoped-for future of the kingdoms under the Protestant rule of Henry.³⁴

The physical impression made by the young prince in his role as Oberon must have been splendid. His costume far outshone even those

³² Elizabeth was associated with Diana, chaste goddess of the moon. For a discussion of the Elizabethan iconography in Jones’s designs, see Butler, *Stuart Court Masque* (see above, n. 2), p. 192.

³³ Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, p. 190.

³⁴ As Tom Bishop astutely notes, masques aim ‘to reveal the very moment when the future begins’, especially when ‘that future takes the form of a revived past’ (‘The Gingerbread Host: Tradition and Novelty in the Jacobean Masque’, in Bevington and Holbrook, eds., *Politics* [see above, n. 2], p. 95).

of his fairy entourage, as Jones's design makes clear.³⁵ Trumbull's report speaks of all the 'gentlemen' in the masque wearing 'scarlet hose', 'white brodequins full of silver spangles', 'gold and suilver cloth' and 'very high white plumes'; however, whereas each of these fairy knights wore 'a very rich blue band across the body', Henry's band was 'scarlet, to distinguish him from the rest' (p. 522). The symbolism of Oberon's armour is also significant: Trumbull describes it as resembling that of the 'Roman emperors' (p. 522), and Jones's sketch includes warlike leonine faces on the sleeve, breastplate and boots, linking Oberon with classical heroism as well as the aggressive energy of the satyrs.³⁶ The audience, which included the Venetian and Spanish ambassadors, would quickly have learnt that the prince, though spoken of as serene and graceful, was not to be trifled with. This was a fairy prince whose nature was indeed not 'airy nothing'³⁷ but a substantial presence. According to Jonson's stage directions, Oberon's chariot was 'drawne by two white beares' (lines 296–97), an exotic touch implying that the extremes of the natural world, as well as the supernatural, had been conquered and tamed by the prince.³⁸ Although Henry's role was silent—he appeared as the centre of the spectacle and then took part extensively in the dancing—the preparations and rehearsals were extensive (reportedly taking six weeks)³⁹ since, as Tom Bishop observes, the 'currency' of the masque focuses intently on 'bodies' and 'bodily presence'.⁴⁰ The Venetian ambassador's report supplies evidence that Henry carried off his corporeal ceremonies and dancing with great success: 'On Tuesday the Prince gave his Masque, which was very beautiful throughout, very decorative, but most remarkable for the grace of the Prince's every movement'.⁴¹ Once again, 'grace' is a key term in the

³⁵ Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones* (see above, n. 2), 1:204, plate 70.

³⁶ See Ravelhofer, *Early Stuart Masque* (see above, n. 2), p. 201, and John Peacock, 'The Stuart Court Masque and the Theatre of the Greeks', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993), 207.

³⁷ *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (see above, n. 10), 5.1.16.

³⁸ It is possible that these polar bears, sent as a gift to the king from the Muscovite Company and known to have been at the Bankside bear garden in London at this time, were also the inspiration for Shakespeare's notorious stage direction in *The Winter's Tale*, 3.3.58: 'Exit, pursued by a bear'. See Barbara Ravelhofer, 'Beasts of Recreation': Philip Henslowe's White Bears', *English Literary Renaissance* 32.2 (2002), 287–323, and Ravelhofer, *Early Stuart Masque* (see above, n. 2), p. 203.

³⁹ Ben Jonson, [*Works*], ed. Herford and Simpson (see above, n. 2), 10:520.

⁴⁰ Bishop, 'Tradition and Novelty' (see above, n. 34), p. 97.

⁴¹ Rawdon Brown et al., eds., *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice, 1610–13* (London, 1905), p. 106.

account of Oberon/Henry: like the word itself, the prince seems to have combined courtly elegance with a prospect of redemption.

Jonson's *Oberon* thus achieves a great deal within the narrow scope of a masque whose chief character does not speak, whose total text for the supporting cast runs to less than five hundred lines, and whose enacted time-span is one short night. The piece contains mythological and supernatural entertainment in the present, delights for the eye and ear, reverence for the memory of Elizabeth, current allegiance to King James and optimism for the power of the Prince of Wales to save and sustain the Protestant nation in the future. With this concern for looking both backward and forward, and indeed into the supposedly timeless existence of otherworldly creatures, it is perhaps not surprising to find an ostentatious preoccupation with the passage of time during the masque. As William Trumbull noted, the moon was visible above Jones's set and moved during the performance, marking out the phases of the night. From the very beginning the satyrs are urged not to waste the hours of the night during which they can indulge in their revels:

Come away,
Times be short, are made for play;
The hum'rous Moone too will not stay:
What doth make you thus delay? (lines 13–16)

Despite the fact that 'Times be short', the satyrs are rebuked for their impatient 'petulance' as they wait outside Oberon's palace: Sylvane advises them that their 'expectance' comes 'too soone' because 'before the second cock / Crow, the gates will not unlock' (lines 242, 245–47). From the changeable moon to the cock-crow of dawn, the audience is left in no doubt of the importance of time to the action. The entire masque, performed as it was on New Year's Day, is constructed as the moment when Oberon and his knights pay their 'annuall vowes' to Arthur in his 'British court' (lines 328, 322); as Martin Butler points out, the cock does not simply crow once but 'twelve times, announcing a new year'.⁴² Even Oberon, whose loveliness is greater than 'in May / Is the Spring' (lines 71–72), is subject to the rule of time: he emerges with the second crow of the cockerel but must withdraw at the behest of Phosphorus, the 'day-starre' (line 421), as soon as the 'Moone is pale and spent' and morning rises to put away the stars 'with her rosie hand' (lines 436, 439). Oberon's lack of independence from

⁴² Butler, *Stuart Court Masque* (see above, n. 2), p. 189.

the constraints of time is deftly explained away in the closing lines of the masque: it is merely the result of the sun's jealousy, since the fairy prince's night-time court has such 'brightness' that the world might want it to last forever and 'never misse' the light of the sun (lines 454–55).

The action of *Oberon* takes place entirely at night, and this implicit tension between the moon and the sun at the end of the masque fascinatingly hints at some of the less harmonious aspects of the actual relationships in James's family and court. While James is praised for holding a course 'as certayne as the sunne', Henry's 'solemne rites', though 'lighted by the moone', are said to 'shew as rich, as if the sunne / Had made this night his noon' (lines 353, 385–88). The masque did indeed turn night into noon, being set in Oberon's night-time realm but dazzling with its lights as bright as day. Tactfully, Jonson's verse reminds the audience that the moon's light is borrowed from the sun, adding that the actual sun's light itself is now outshone by James, the 'greater light' (line 390) of the masque's universe. However, the very idea that Prince Henry's apparently lesser light might outshine the king's rays had been an underlying anxiety to James since the birth of his son and heir, whom he sent away as a very young child to be fostered, apparently in order to prevent court factions clustering around Henry and threatening his own authority. This was greatly resented by Henry's mother, Anna of Denmark, and was one of several reasons for the deep rift between the king and queen, which had led to the separateness of their lives and courts by 1611. Henry, too, had begun to go his separate way now that he had come of age,⁴³ and was gathering a coterie around him at St. James's Palace. Thus the blurring of the distinctions between night and day, as well as between the satyrs and fairies in the nocturnal kingdom, is part of the masque's covert strategy as it attempts to hold together the several royal courts in Jacobean London. The masque dances subtly across political and familial fault-lines, suggesting that the Latin motto on the stage curtain⁴⁴ might refer to local palaces as well as more distant lands which required bringing into '*concordi pace*'.

In these circumstances, it is surely significant that when Henry, as Oberon, stepped out of his carriage towards the end of the masque and began to dance, his partner was his mother. According to Trumbull, Henry 'took the queen to dance' three times, in 'an English dance resembling a pavane', followed by a 'coranta' and later, after a galliard had been danced

⁴³ See Bishop, 'Tradition and Novelty' (see above, n. 34), pp. 102–04.

⁴⁴ See above, p. 212, note 27.

by others present (including Henry's sister, the Princess Elizabeth, and the Earl of Southampton), 'the prince took the queen a third time for *los branles de Poitou*' (p. 523). Music for these and other dances from the masque has survived, some of it by Robert Johnson and some unattributed,⁴⁵ and documents detailing the costs for the masque indicate that many musicians were involved, including lutenists and violinists, and players of 'hautboys', 'flageolets' and cornets.⁴⁶ After all of this entertainment, the king was reportedly 'somewhat tired', which is surprising given that he is the only significant person present who had not been involved in the dancing. Had he perhaps seen enough of his son and queen—his perceived rivals in the public's affection—on display in their dances? 'See you not, who riseth here?' asks the satyr in the opening speech of the masque (line 8), referring to the moon. However, as Tom Bishop has noted, this question hovers over the entire action, as the young prince 'rises' at court and comes into his own.⁴⁷ Whether James was simply weary or, possibly, rendered uneasy by Henry's evident success and Anna's association with it, will never be known; but for whatever reason, as Trumbull records in his account of the evening, at this point the king firmly 'sent word that they should make an end' (p. 523), and the entertainment was concluded.

Sadly, the young princely hero of *Oberon* was soon to make a profound 'end' in a way that those around him neither expected nor wished. The following year, aged only eighteen, the apparently healthy Prince Henry died suddenly of an intense fever (probably typhoid) and became, like his alter ego in the masque, merely spirit. The national mourning was intense and the course of British history was deeply affected.⁴⁸ It is tempting to see a poignant anticipation of this imminent personal and political loss in the closing lines of Trumbull's description of the 1611 masque: when the

⁴⁵ See Chan, *Music in the Theatre* (see above, n. 2), pp. 240–41.

⁴⁶ See Ben Jonson, [Works], ed. Herford and Simpson (see above, n. 2), 10:519–22. The 'flageolets' are mentioned by Trumbull (p. 522), and the cornet is required for the opening scene (at line 11). Again, the mingling of rustic and courtly instruments is in keeping with the reconciling vision of *Oberon*.

⁴⁷ Bishop, 'Tradition and Novelty', p. 109; he also links Henry's 'rising star at court' with 'Jonson's ambitions as his poet'.

⁴⁸ Although it is evident that Charles I was a very different personality from his elder brother and that Henry could well have handled the subsequent political crises more successfully, a useful corrective note to the assumed significance of Henry's early death has recently been sounded by James M. Sutton in his entry for Prince Henry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, where he comments that 'estimations of what was lost have been greatly inflated, then and now'.

'king and queen with the ladies and gentlemen of the masque' had left the hall, 'in a moment everything was thrown down with furious haste, according to the strange custom of the country' (p. 523). Like Prospero's 'cloud-capped towers' and 'gorgeous palaces', the 'insubstantial pageant' of the masque 'melted into air, into thin air' and left 'not a rack behind'.⁴⁹ Fortunately, however, the textual evidence of *Oberon* has outlived both the temporary constructions and the young prince who played so central a role in its conception and performance.

The nature of Jonson's published text for *Oberon* can still in itself convey a sense of the elaborateness of the event. As the layout of the folio pages suggests, the spoken word is by no means the most prominent aspect of the masque, even from the poet's point of view.⁵⁰ The poetic dialogue is interwoven with descriptions of the scene, annotations citing the classical origins of the supernatural beings and their names, stage directions for movement and dancing, indications of the soundscape with its cornets and echoes, and even a bracketed interpretative note hinting at the speaker's thoughts.⁵¹ Along with this unusually rich textual evidence, the other extant documents—designs, song settings, dance music, lists of participants, accounts and eye-witness reports—make it almost possible to reconstruct the event (money and polar bears permitting).⁵² However, the complex interaction of fictional characters and royal personages, or ancient classical myths and contemporary political realities, can never be recreated. Neither, too, can the impact of Jonson's innovations in the masque form and his realignment of supernatural beings be fully conveyed to modern audiences who are not thoroughly immersed in court entertainment and the symbolism of satyrs and fairies. It is to be hoped that this essay has to some extent remedied the situation, by arguing the case for Jonson's imaginative vision in reducing the separation of anti-masque and masque, which enabled the action and settings to develop in

⁴⁹ Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (see above, n. 40), 4.1.150–55.

⁵⁰ Jonson, *Workes*, p. 975; the opening page is included in facsimile in Ben Jonson, [*Works*], ed. Herford and Simpson (see above, n. 2), 7:339.

⁵¹ Barbara Ravelhofer has interestingly observed that the complexity of the printed text of a Jonson masque, with its mixture of elements and font sizes receding from the reader in 'perspective', leads the page to resemble a stage design in itself, with the marginal notes encasing the main text 'as a proscenium arch might have framed court masques' (*Early Stuart Masque* [see above, n. 2], p. 206).

⁵² According to Bevington and Holbrook (writing in 1998), Tom Bishop has indeed 'co-produced a full reconstruction' of the masque (*Politics* [see above, n. 2], p. xi).

an unbroken sequence of entertainment and symbolic effect. As a result, Jonson accommodated and expanded the ranks of supernatural beings in the progress of the masque, allowing the satyrs with their 'shaggie thighs' (line 122) to be on stage to the very end of the performance, mingling with the fairies and other 'formes, so bright, and aery' (line 429). *Oberon* is thus a fine mixture of learning and pragmatism, innovation and rhetoric, art and performance, worthy of its creators and its occasion.

PARACELSIAN SPIRITS IN POPE'S *RAPE OF THE LOCK*

Jan R. Veenstra

The Rape of the Lock is not a metaphysical poem, even though in one important respect it follows Samuel Johnson's description of that genre as entailing a 'kind of *discordia concors*'.¹ *The Rape* yokes together two heterogeneous entities that would not normally be found in each other's company; on the one hand it derives from Milton's *Paradise Lost* the epic dimensions of the world of angels, on the other hand the poet peoples this world with sylphs and nymphs that properly belong to the world of fairie. The metaphysical poets were criticised in the eighteenth century for their perverse ingenuity and 'false wit', even though they wrote their verse in a vein of high seriousness. Pope's mock epic is the acknowledged epitome of 'true wit', but seriousness is not something that Pope would claim for his supernatural agents—the spirits that he referred to as the 'machinery'.²

Pope derived his spirits from Rosicrucian doctrine, as he explained in the dedicatory epistle to the second edition of his poem in 1714, and thereby for a moment created the impression that he relied upon a solid and authentic philosophy.³ Yet he knew, probably all too well, that Rosicrucians were generally denounced as a 'sect of mountebanks' and in all likelihood he made the reference to create a suggestion of erudition that on second reflection might easily be discarded. In like manner, his

¹ In his 'Life of Cowley', Samuel Johnson defined a metaphysical conceit as a *discordia concors* and added: 'the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together' (quoted from M. H. Abrams, G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* [Boston, 2005], p. 43).

² 'Machinery' (cf. *deus ex machina*) was a general term for supernatural agents such as angels, demons, spirits or gods. See Addison's remark in note 9 below.

³ All references to *The Rape* are from the following edition: Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, vol. 2 (London, 1940). The dedicatory epistle to Arabella Fermor is on pp. 142–43. On Rosicrucianism in Britain, see Tillotson's remarks on pp. 356–57, and also Adam McLean, 'The Manuscript Sources of the English Translation of the Rosicrucian Manifestos', in *Rosenkreuz als europäisches Phänomen im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica (Amsterdam, 2002), pp. 271–85. As a concept and a philosophy, Rosicrucianism was introduced in England in the seventeenth century notably by Thomas Vaughan, John Heydon and Robert Fludd (on Heydon, see note 56 below). Instrumental in the early dissemination of Rosicrucian doctrines—McLean argues—was a group of Scottish aristocrats close to King Charles I and King James.

application of the machinery suggests to the reader a pneumatological metaphysics that is soon belied by the irony and satire of his burlesque. Thus in an unexpected way—and possibly without the author's express intention—*The Rape of the Lock* came to reflect enlightened ideas and sceptical attitudes regarding supernatural agency. In the age of reason the witty satire might be construed to vent the metaphysical doubts of Locke or Hobbes. Whereas Milton in *Paradise Lost* (from which *The Rape* derived some of its epic grandeur) had indecisively wavered between a Ptolemaic and a Copernican perception of the cosmos,⁴ Pope in his depiction of the universe of his nymphs and sylphs underwent the further impact of the mechanised world picture by introducing supernatural agents with shady credentials.

The origin of Pope's machinery has attracted the attention of a number of scholars⁵ who all point at the doctrine of elemental spirits as developed by the Swiss doctor and alchemist Paracelsus (Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, 1493–1541). The latter's ideas were popularised in *Le Comte de Gabalis*, a novel in the form of a series of dialogues by the abbé Nicolas Pierre Henri Montfaucon de Villars (1635–1673), Pope's immediate source.⁶ There is, however, a considerable difference between

⁴ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (London, 1964), 10.668–680: 'Some say he bid his angels turn askance / The poles of earth twice ten degrees and more / From the sun's axle' (Copernican view); 'some say the sun / Was bid turn reins from th' equinoctial road' (Ptolemaic view).

⁵ The Paracelsian roots of Pope's machinery were noted, among others, by Montague Summers in his introduction to Lodovico Maria Sinistrari, *Demoniality* (London, 1927), pp. xxxvii–xxxviii; Edward D. Seeber, 'Sylphs and Other Elemental Beings in French Literature since *Le Comte de Gabalis* (1670)', *PMLA* 59 (1944), 71–83; Kurt Goldammer, *Paracelsus in der deutschen Romantik* (Wien, 1980), p. 89; and recently by Bonnie Latimer, 'Alchemies of Satire: A History of the Sylphs in *The Rape of the Lock*', *The Review of English Studies* 57 (2006), 684–700.

⁶ The book was first printed in 1670. An edition of 1671 is available online through gallica.bnf.fr: *Le Comte de Gabalis, ou Entretiens sur les sciences secrètes* (Paris, 1671). Montfaucon de Villars, *Le Comte de Gabalis ou entretiens sur les sciences secrètes. La Critique de Bérénice*, ed. Roger Laufer (Paris, 1963) is a critical and annotated edition; in this essay, quotations in French (in the spelling of the seventeenth century) are from this edition. Also important is the following edition produced for an esoterically minded readership: Montfaucon de Villars, *Le Comte de Gabalis ou Entretiens sur les Sciences secrètes, précédé de Magie et Dilettantisme "Le Roman de Montfaucon de Villars", et L'Histoire de "la Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédauque"* par René-Louis Doyon, et *L'Ésoterisme de Gabalis* par Paul Marteau (Paris, 1921). In 1680 two English translations appeared almost simultaneously, the first by Philip Ayres, the second by Archibald Lovell: *The Count of Gabalis: Or, the Extravagant Mysteries of the Cabalists, exposed in Five Pleasant Discourses on the Secret Sciences*. Done into English by P. A. [= Philip Ayres] Gent. (London, 1680); and *The Count of Gabalis or, Conferences about Secret Sciences*. Rendered out of French into English with an Advice to the Reader by A. L. [= Archibald Lovell] A. M. (London, 1680).

the serious scientific endeavours of Paracelsus and the ironical presentation of esoteric lore in Villars' novel. The spirits that to the mind of the sixteenth-century alchemist were still solid objects of inquiry had towards the end of the seventeenth century transformed into veritable flights of fancy. What Pope copied from his source was not simply a hierarchy of spirits of earth, water, air and fire, but also the ironical twist that the abbé had given to his presentation of the otherworldly creatures.

This essay examines the genealogy of elemental spirits from Paracelsus to Pope. It traces the origins of what Pope believed to be Rosicrucian lore first to the English translators of *Le Comte de Gabalis*, and then to the work of Villars itself. Finally, we briefly discuss the treatise by Paracelsus that lies at the root of the doctrine of elemental spirits. These three texts are clearly related, the earlier providing inspiration for the later, and all three of them deal (or even struggle) with the rational legitimization of natural spirits. What began as science in Paracelsus ended up as mockery in Pope. The discussions below show that this brief genealogy of spirits can be seen as indicative of the gradual decline of traditional metaphysics whereby critical minds began to discuss the absurdities of supernatural agency. Pope may not initially have conceived of his poem as a contribution to that discussion, but his addition of the machinery made him heir to Villars' sceptical though subtle critique of mysticism. The origins of Pope's mock epic, however, lie elsewhere, in something conspicuously mundane.

The composition of *The Rape of the Lock* was occasioned by an actual incident that took place sometime before 21 March 1712. This is the date on which Pope sold the first version of his poem, at that moment consisting of two cantos, to the London printer and bookseller Bernard Lintott.⁷ Apparently two prominent and intermarried Catholic families, the Fermors and the Petres, had suffered some degree of estrangement after Robert, Lord Petre (for reasons unknown as the incident itself remains unsubstantiated) cut off a lock of hair from Miss Arabella Fermor. A friend and relative of the Petres, John Caryll, suggested to Pope that he make fun of the little incident in a poem so as to 'laugh them together again'. Pope was willing to oblige though it is by no means certain that he actually knew the people involved. He may have had the acquaintance of Arabella

⁷ This first edition of the *Rape* was in a volume called *Windsor-Forest* containing 'Windsor-Forest' by Pope, 'The Duel of the Stags' by Robert Howard, and 'The Rape of the Locke'. The booklet was reprinted a year later in Dublin in 1713 (available through EEBO).

Fermor, who is Belinda in the *Rape*, but he certainly did not know Lord Petre, who is represented as the Baron in the poem. Another character (known to Pope and the spitting image of whom he depicted in the *Rape* in the figure of Sir Plume) was Sir George Brown, a member of the Fermor family and a cousin to Arabella's mother.

For a while the poem circulated in manuscript form in both family circles and apparently had the desired effect, but this changed dramatically when Pope sold the text to Lintott who printed it in 1712. Printing was a necessity, since manuscripts of the poem had been distributed so liberally that Pope had well-founded fears that ere long a pirated version would appear. With a more open and public circulation of the *Rape* both the Fermor and the Petre households felt their reputations might suffer unwanted damage and especially Sir George Brown is known to have threatened Pope with physical violence. He clearly felt insulted since the character of Sir Plume speaks nothing but nonsense in the poem and readers outside the immediate circle of the two families might easily infer the fictional Sir Plume to be a comment on his character. Also Arabella Fermor felt her reputation imperilled; lines such as 'What mov'd my Mind with youthful Lords to rome? O had I stay'd, and said my Pray'rs at home!' suggested a frivolity that might cause society to frown upon the character of Lady Arabella.⁸

Pope was somehow compelled to make amends and in December 1713 he resolved to transform the 334-line satire of two cantos into a 794-line mock epic of five cantos. He added substantial parts, especially in the first half of the poem: Belinda's dream of Ariel, Belinda's toilet, the voyage up the Thames, Ariel's speech to the sylphs, the game of ombre, and Umbriel's visit to the Cave of Spleen. The work was preceded by a dedicatory letter to Mrs. Arabella Fermor in which Pope emphasised that all human characters in the poem were entirely fictitious and that Belinda resembled Mrs. Fermor only in beauty. The letter suggested furthermore that the new edition was published at the behest of Lady Arabella so as to prevent the circulation of pirated versions. This new and expanded edition appeared in 1714.

Joseph Addison in the *Spectator* of 30 October 1712 had praised the first version of *The Rape of the Lock* for its application of pagan mythology to the genre of the mock-heroic, which allowed the modern author to ridicule

⁸ *Rape of the Lock* (see above, n. 3), 4.159–60. On the history and background of the poem, see Tillotson's 'Introduction', in *id.*, pp. 83–124.

the 'fabulous machines of the ancients'.⁹ By this Addison meant the vehicles of supernatural agency such as Fate, the gods, angels or demons, who in one way or another interfered with the course of nature or the course of history. It was precisely this machinery that Pope seized upon (inspired by Addison, yet against his advice to leave the poem unaltered) to develop his poem into a fully-fledged heroi-comical poem. In his dedicatory letter, Pope explained that 'the ancient poets are in one respect like many modern ladies: let an action be never so trivial in itself, they always make it appear of the utmost importance'.¹⁰ Although it is unclear whether this remark applied to any ladies that Pope knew, it certainly applied to Pope himself. For in the same dedicatory letter, Pope explained that it was his intention to raise these machines 'on a very new and odd foundation', namely 'the Rosicrucian doctrine of spirits'.¹¹

Pope had acquainted himself with Rosicrucian philosophy through one of the best accounts known to him, a French book called *Le Comte de Gabalis* (he mentions the title in French though there were already two English translations available to him). In this work, he found an elaborate exposition of the doctrine of the elementals which teaches that the four elements (earth, water, air and fire) are inhabited by spirits: there are the sylphs of the air, the gnomes of the earth, the nymphs of the water and the salamanders of the fire. In comparing *Le Comte de Gabalis* and *The Rape of the Lock*, literary historians have pointed out that Pope owed as much to fairy creatures and spirits in Shakespeare, Milton and Dryden as to those in Villars.¹² Pope certainly was the first to emphasise that his machinery was entirely fabulous and fictitious, but his reference to the Rosicrucians and the *Comte de Gabalis* was strategic for a different reason. *Le Comte de Gabalis* is a dialogue between the Count of *Gabalis*, who is an adept of occult science and a connoisseur of spirits, and a sceptical first person narrator. The count tries to convince his friend that the world is replete with elemental spirits who, throughout history, have frequently

⁹ *Spectator* 523 (30 October 1712): 'In Mock-Heroick Poems, the use of the Heathen Mythology is not only excusable but graceful, because it is the Design of such Compositions to divert, by adapting the fabulous Machines of the Ancients to low Subjects, and at the same time by ridiculing such kinds of Machinery in Modern Writers' (quoted from Tillotson's introduction in *The Rape of the Lock* [see above, n. 3], p. 121, n. 2).

¹⁰ *The Rape of the Lock*, p. 142.

¹¹ *The Rape of the Lock*, p. 142.

¹² See Cleanth Brooks, 'The Case of Miss Arabella Fermor: A Re-Examination', *The Sewanee Review* 51 (1943), 505–24, at 520; Pat Rogers, 'Faery Lore and *The Rape of the Lock*', *The Review of English Studies*, n.s., 25 (1974), 25–38; Kent Beyette, 'Milton and Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 16.3 (1976), 421–36.

entered into conjugal union with humans. In spite of his admiration for the count's learning and arguments, the narrator finds this very hard to believe and is not easily persuaded. The text so much resembles a novel, Pope explains, that many ladies 'have read it for one by mistake'. That is a very telling formulation. Apparently this book in the guise of a novel, Pope infers, should be read as a book of secret doctrine. Nowhere in his dedicatory letter does Pope suggest that the book is a joke or its author a wit. Thus he persuades the readers to read the *Lock* as an amusing satire with jocular references to a very serious and secret doctrine.¹³

In 1714 Bernard Lintott published the expanded version of *The Rape of the Lock* (which within a few years established Pope's reputation as the greatest poet of his age), and just a few months later a new edition of *The Diverting History of the Count de Gabalis: containing An Account of the Rosicrucian Doctrine of Spirits, viz. Sylphs, Salamanders, Gnomes, and Daemons*. To alert potential buyers he added an advertisement page: 'Very necessary for the readers of Mr. Pope's *Rape of the Lock*. Price 1s. 6d'.¹⁴ With this new and expanded edition of the *Rape* Mr. Pope saved the reputation of a lady (she lost some hair but kept her face), established himself as a poet, did his publisher a great favour by making it profitable to reprint *Gabalis*, and—last but not least—propagated a mystification.

This mystification mainly lies in the fact that *Le Comte de Gabalis* was not originally published as a Rosicrucian work.¹⁵ Though Rosicrucianism

¹³ Pope, one feels, did this in jest, but the phenomenon is well-known in the book industry where popular fiction such as J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* or Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* have spawned groups of 'believers' who create an air of mystification and help increase sales-figures.

¹⁴ *The Diverting History of the Count de Gabalis*, second edition (London, 1714); the advertisement is on the first page of the book (online available through EEBO).

¹⁵ It is surmised that Villars was familiar with Rosicrucianism and some scholars (notably Stanislas de Guaita) have speculated that Villars was a Rosicrucian, but the book itself contains no hints in that direction. See Doyon, 'Magie et dilettantisme' (see above, n. 6), p. xii. Seeber believes that the label 'Rosicrucian novel' was well established before 1800 and lists several sources (modern contemporary critics and sources from before 1800) who apply this label to *Le Comte de Gabalis*. Naturally, later critics copied the label from the earlier ones, but among those, the label is never related to actual Rosicrucian doctrine. See Seeber, 'Sylphs' (see above, n. 5), 74. Roger Laufer, in the introduction to his edition of *Gabalis* (see above, n. 6), notably on p. 31, uses the label dismissively. Bonnie Latimer ('Alchemies of Satire' [see above, n. 5], 686–91) is the first to argue that *Gabalis* may not have been a Rosicrucian work, but in building her argument she does not analyse the first English translations, nor does she deal with the alleged links between Villars and Rosicrucianism. Her argument rests solely on the fact that Paracelsus' doctrines of elemental spirits are absent from the first Rosicrucian manifestos. That, however, does not prove that *Gabalis* is not a Rosicrucian text, since the first Rosicrucians were Paracelsians. On the background of Rosicrucianism, an excellent introduction is provided by Carlos Gilly,

was quite capable of assimilating whatever esoteric doctrine crossed its path (and especially Paracelsian lore), *Le Comte de Gabalis* as Pope knew it was transformed *into* a Rosicrucian work, most likely in England by one of its first English translators, namely Philip Ayres. It is not at all certain that Pope read the book in French. Ayres used the term 'Rosicrucian' in a pejorative sense and it may well have been for this reason that the book attracted Pope's attention. Pope 'rosicrucianised' his machinery in much the same way as Ayres 'rosicrucianised' his translation of *Le Comte de Gabalis*. By suggesting that both works were based on a body of secret doctrine, Pope and, before him, Ayres succeeded in catering for the tastes of both believers and non-believers, of those who were under the spell of ancient wisdom and those who ridiculed it. Both books sold well.

The original work, *Le Comte de Gabalis* by abbé Montfaucon de Villars, was published in Paris in 1670. Little is known of the life of the abbé de Villars. An *Arrest du Parlement de Toulouze* stipulates that he and some relatives (notably his brothers Gabriel and Louis) were accused of murder (in 1662), attempted murder and arson (in 1668) and were sentenced (in 1669) to be racked. The abbé spent the last years of his life as a fugitive.¹⁶ This did not prevent him from becoming a prolific writer in his later years. He published literary criticism, two anti-heroic novels and a philosophical tale; according to literary historians, Villars in his day was an important critic of Racine, Corneille and Pascal. Unless one reads the book as a satire, it seems difficult to fit *Le Comte de Gabalis* into any of these categories, but

'Die Rosenkreutzer als europäisches Phänomen im 17. Jahrhundert und die verschlungenen Pfade der Forschung', in *Rosenkreuz als europäisches Phänomen* (see above, n. 3), pp. 19–56. Rosicrucianism emerged from the circle of Tobias Hess, an adept of Paracelsianism, and Johann Valentin Andreae, the confessed author of the first Rosicrucian manifestos. In Pope's day, the concept of a Rosicrucian philosophy was well-established in Britain, notably through the works of John Heydon who had much to say about spirits, but little about fairies (see note 56 below).

¹⁶ *Arrest du Parlement de Toulouze du deux Decembre 1669, par lequel Henry de Montfaucon, qui se fait appeller Abbé de Villars: & qui passe pour l'Auteur du Comte de Gabalis, & de la Delicatesse pour la defense du P. B. I. a esté condamné avec ses complices à estre rompu tout vif, & à expirer sur la rouë, & leurs biens confisquez pour crimes d'assassin, meurtre & incendie*. The document (dated 1669) was printed in 1670 after the publication of *Gabalès* and is available online through gallica.bnf.fr. The title only mentions Henri, though the arrest makes clear there was a gang of at least four. Apparently the abbé's literary fame occasioned the printing of the *Arrest*. The murder victim was Paul de Ferrovil, sieur de Montgaillard. The nature of the conflict between the Montfaucons and Montgaillards remains in the dark, but animosity ran deep as the Montfaucon brothers burned down the château of Pierre de Ferrovil [*sic*], the son of the murder victim.

it is the work that brought him lasting fame.¹⁷ It also incurred the king's displeasure so that his licence to preach was withdrawn. The book was blacklisted and escaped to the Netherlands where it went through several print runs, some of them after the untimely death of the abbé de Villars in 1673. In that year, the abbé was assassinated on the road to Lyon by persons unknown. The incident attracted people's attention at the time, as it was rumoured that a gang of sylphs had killed him for his disclosure of their secrets.¹⁸ This rumour was an echo of one of the opening lines of *Gabalís* where the author explained that after the death of the count 'Messieurs les Curieux ne manqueront pas de dire que ce genre de mort est ordinaire à ceux qui ménagent mal les secrets des Sages'.¹⁹ In spite of the official censure, it was a question of debate even on its first publication whether or not the book should be taken seriously. The abbé de Villars further obfuscated matters by adding a 'Lettre à Monseigneur ***' in a later edition in which he suggested that the Cabalists—the principal propagators of the doctrines expounded in the book, or so he suggests—should be opposed and refuted for teaching nonsense. This letter might have been added to emphasise that the contents of the book were to be taken with a pinch of salt, but it may well have had quite the opposite effect by suggesting its contents were based on the teachings of a fraternity of 'Cabalists'.

The ambiguities of the book's early reception can be illustrated by means of two examples. Christiaan Huygens visiting Paris in May 1671 wrote in a letter to his brother Lodewijk (30 July 1671) that he had come across a book that was all the rage in Paris called *Le Comte de Gabalis*. He found the book most enjoyable and regretted that it was now officially suppressed by the government. According to Huygens, it was a satire of cabalistic doctrines.²⁰ In 1681 an Italian book was published in the Low Countries called *La Chiave del Gabinetto del Cavagliere Giosepe Francesco Borri*. It contained ten letters of which the first two were verbatim copies of the first two discourses from *Le Comte de Gabalis*. Since they were dated 'Copenhagen, 1666', some critics speculated that Villars had plagiarised

¹⁷ Edward Seeber lists over eighty works that were clearly influenced by *Gabalís* in a period of two and a half centuries after the book's first publication. Cf. Seeber, 'Sylphs' (see above, n. 5), 80–83, and also Laufer's introduction to his edition of *Gabalís* (see above, n. 6), pp. 47–54.

¹⁸ Laufer, 'Introduction', in *Gabalís*, p. 12, quotes from the 'Journal pour Mademoiselle de Menon' by Mme de Murat (MS, 1708).

¹⁹ *Gabalís*, ed. Laufer (see above, n. 6), p. 68.

²⁰ *Gabalís*, ed. Laufer, p. 47.

them, but in fact it was the other way round. The author, Giosepe Borri, was condemned by the Inquisition for having founded an illuminist Christian sect and at the time when *La Chiave* was published he was imprisoned in Rome. Clearly, he had used *Gabalís* as a source of inspiration, taking its doctrines seriously.²¹

On its first introduction in England in 1680 similar doubts and ambiguities surfaced. The book came into the hands of Archibald Lovell who translated it for the bookseller (Robert Harford, according to the title page) who had commissioned him. This bookseller, however, did not make great haste to have the book printed, and much to his horror Lovell saw another translation appear not long before his own. This second translation was made by Philip Ayres: *The Count of Gabalis: Or, the Extravagant Mysteries of the Cabalists, exposed in Five Pleasant Discourses on the Secret Sciences*, printed for B. M., printer to the Cabalistical Society of the Sages at the Sign of the Rosy-Crucian'. It is unlikely that this edition was commissioned by a cabal of Rosicrucians, even though Ayres deliberately 'rosicrucianised' the text. Where the abbé de Villars had written 'Cabalists' Ayres added 'Rosicrucians', thus giving the work a new ideological bedding.²² Such liberties do not suggest that Ayres was partial to Rosicrucian beliefs, for when one

²¹ *Gabalís*, ed. Laufer, pp. 21–22; Doyon, 'Magie et dilettantisme' (see above, n. 6), pp. xxxii–xxxiv. Additional proof that some took *Gabalís* seriously is offered by a Wittenberg dissertation from 1704: *Dissertationum physicarum, quibus Elementicolae Comte de Gabalis examinantur, prima quam publico eruditorum examini submittent praeses M. Io. Georg. Hocheisen, Ulmensis, et respondens David Bernardus* (Vitembergae, 1704). With Spinoza as authority of sound reason, Hocheisen condemns *Gabalís'* *philosophemata* as *monstrous* and *ab omni procul veritate remota* (sig. B4v; the text is available through books.google.com). Since the early prints of *Gabalís* do not mention Villars as author, Hocheisen observes that some have identified the author as Fr. Ios. Burrhi from Milano (i.e. Giosepe Borri) who was condemned by the inquisition (*ad perpetuos carceres damnatum*) but liberated by the Count of Estrées. There is an article on Borri in Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique* (cf. note 27 below), but Bayle does not identify Borri as the author of *Le Comte de Gabalis*. [With special thanks to prof. Guillaume van Gemert for drawing my attention to this dissertation.]

²² Two examples from Villars' 'Lettre': 'Il dit que Tertullien dit ce beau mot contre les Valentinien, qui étoient une maniere de Cabalistes tres-visionaires' (*Gabalís*, ed. Laufer [see above, n. 6], p. 140). This was rendered rather liberally by Ayres as 'He said, That Tertullian used this Excellent Saying, against the Valentinians, who were a kind of very Fanatick Rosy-Crucians, in his Dayes' (*Gabalís*, trans. Ayres [see above, n. 6], sig. A3v). Lovell on other hand faithfully translates: 'He says that Tertullian uses that pretty Sentence against the Valentinians, who were a kind of most Enthusiastick Cabalists' (*Gabalís*, trans. Lovell [see above, n. 6], p. 131). Villars admonishes his lord to oppose the Cabalists: 'Je maintiens qu'il seroit bon de proceder contre les Cabalistes & contre toutes les Sciences secretes, par de serieux & vigoureux argumens' (p. 141). Ayres translates: 'I affirm, It would be most proper, to proceed against the Cabalists, or Rosy-Crucians, and against all their Secret Sciences, by serious and vigorous Arguments' (sig. A4r). Lovell: 'I hold it

reads the 'Animadversions' appended to the translation one gets quite a different impression. There Ayres calls the book a 'philosophick romance as fabulous and weak as an Old Monk's legend' and its author a 'creature of much choler and little brains', 'a great hater of women, yet much addicted to venery, in a philosophick way'. As to those who are inclined to take the doctrines stated therein seriously, he recommends Bedlam as the fittest Academy for the believers.²³ Ayres was no Rosicrucian but he certainly mistook Villars for one.

Archibald Lovell, the other translator, took great exception to these animadversions and in the introduction to his edition suggested that it is 'a kind of ingenteel carriage to invite a stranger into one's country and instead of civil usage, put him into a fool's coat and expose him to derision'. He also criticised Ayres for several mistakes in his translation and for insulting the French.²⁴ One can well understand his anger and disappointment. In Lovell's version there is no reference to Rosicrucianism though from his annoyance over Ayres's remarks one may surmise that he was inclined to take the ideas in the *Comte de Gabalis* seriously. This apparently is not the case with Ayres who had respect neither for the author, nor for the work, nor for its consenting readers. In line with Lovell, one may well wonder why Ayres bothered to translate the book at all. Ayres may have been into the mystification business, but most likely he was keen to publish the work as a morosophic²⁵ treatise with his own animadversions added as a literary invective. Whatever his motives, his book was successful and while Mr. Lovell's translation was only published once, his was reprinted twice before the end of the century. It is therefore most likely Ayres's translation that was read and used by Pope.

best to proceed against the Cabalists and all the Secret Sciences, by serious and vigorous Arguments' (p. 133).

²³ *Gabalis*, trans. Ayres (see above, n. 6), pp. 1–2 (the 'Animadversions' appear at the end of the volume on pages separately numbered 1–11). The pejorative use of the term 'Rosicrucian' seems to have been standard in those days. John Dennis, citing Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, explains: 'The Fraternity of the Rosycrucians is very like the Sect of the antient Gnostici; who called themselves so from the excellent Learning they pretended to, although they were really the most ridiculous Sots of all Mankind'. See Dennis, *Remarks on Mr. Pope's Rape of the Lock, in Several Letters to a Friend* (London, 1728), p. 4. Dennis, attacking Pope's 'ridiculous' poem, seems to have been convinced that the 'little mimicking Bard', as he called Pope, had taken the 'Phanattick Extravagance of the most ridiculous of all modern Sots' seriously.

²⁴ *Gabalis*, trans. Lovell (see above, n. 6), sig. A2r–A4v, at A4r.

²⁵ This term was recently used by Matthijs van Boxsel, whose *Morosofie* was published in Amsterdam in 2001 as the second volume of his *Encyclopedie van de domheid*.

The edition of the *Comte de Gabalis* published in 1714 by Lintott (and which according to the title page is a 'second edition') shortly after the revised edition of *The Rape of the Lock*, purports to be a new translation, but it seems to have a number of things in common with the two previous translations. On the one hand it follows Ayres in labelling the work 'Rosicrucian', whilst on the other hand it shares with Lovell a greater diligence in presenting a faithful translation.²⁶ It does not contain Villars' original 'Lettre', nor an epilogue with ironical animadversions. Instead, it offers a translation of a brief essay by Pierre Bayle on Rosicrucianism (in which *Le Comte de Gabalis*, by the way, is never mentioned).²⁷ Bayle's article is as scathing as Ayres's animadversions since he calls the Rosicrucians nothing but a 'sect of mountebanks'. The omission of the 'Lettre' was done deliberately, because it deprives the critical reader of the original author's disclaimer. In that way, the new translation of the *Count de Gabalis* could be presented and consolidated as a book of Rosicrucian doctrine and Alexander Pope contributed to this in no small measure.

²⁶ One example must suffice. In the fifth discourse, Gabalis talks about the religious piety of the salamanders to prove that these spirits are not demons. He recites a lengthy 'Prayer of the Salamanders' of which we quote the opening lines. *Gabalis*, ed. Laufer (see above, n. 6), p. 125: 'Oraison des Salamandres. Immortel, Eternel, Ineffable & sacré Pere de toutes choses, qui es porté sur le Chariot roullant sans cesse, des Mondes qui tournent toûjours. Dominateur des Campagnes etheriennes, où est élevé le thrône de ta Puissance'. *Gabalis*, trans. Ayres (see above, n. 6), p. 150: 'The Salamander's Prayer. Immortal, Eternal, Unspeakable and Sacred Father of all Things! who art carried upon the Charriot of the Spheres, which always rowl about. Ruler over the Etherial Armyes, where the Throne of thy Power is raised'. Cf. *Gabalis*, trans. Lovell (see above, n. 6), p. 104: 'The Prayer of the Salamanders. Immortal, Eternal, Ineffable and Holy Father of all Things, who incessantly art carried on the rolling Chariot of ever-turning Worlds. Ruler of the Etherian Fields, where the Throne of thy Power is raised'. Cf. also *Gabalis*, 1714 (see above, n. 14), p. 73: 'A Salamander's Prayer. Immortal, Eternal, Ineffable and Sacred Father of all Things, who ridest upon the ceaseless rolling Chariot of the ever-turning World. Thou Ruler of the Etherial Plains, whereon is erected the Throne of thy Mightiness'. Note how the two latter translations stay close to the French text with 'rolling Chariot' and 'Etherial Fields/Plains', while Ayres loosely (if not erroneously) translates 'Chariot of the Spheres' and 'Etherial Armyes'. The 'Oraison des Salamandres' itself is also a translation from a hymn by Porphyry which Villars found in Augustinus Steuchus Eugubinus, *De perenni philosophia libri X* (Basel, 1542), 3.14, p. 190.

²⁷ This is contrary to the suggestion made on the title page: 'To which is prefix'd, Monsieur Bayle's Account of this Work, and of the Sect of the Rosicrucians'. The *Dictionnaire historique* by Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) contains no lemma on Montfaucon de Villars. Villars is briefly mentioned in the article 'Borri', but is never associated by Bayle with Rosicrucianism. The suggestion by Latimer ('Alchemies of Satire' [see above, n. 5], 687–88) that Bayle might have been the translator of the 1714 version is more than unlikely (even for the sake of argument). The 1714 edition was clearly produced in haste, in the slipstream of the popularity of the *Rape*.

Despite their differences, Ayres, Lovell and the anonymous translator²⁸ of the 1714 edition were of one mind in assuming that Villars was serious in promulgating secret wisdom. Nowadays, however, it is generally acknowledged that *Le Comte de Gabalis* is not a doctrinal work but a satire, directed at the author's contemporary devotees of secret knowledge and who in the book are referred to by various names such as 'Cabalists' or 'Children of the Philosophers' ('Enfans des Philosophes'). The intellectual content of the book consists essentially of two theoretical frames. The first is purely Paracelsian in that it assumes the existence of four categories of elemental spirits who are handicapped by the absence of an immortal soul and who for that reason seek commerce with humans since this union will render them immortal. The second can best be described as Cabalistic as it deals with a fully heterodox interpretation of the Biblical story of the fall of man. Apparently it was not God's intention that man should lust after a woman, but instead form a union with a gnome, sylph, nymph or salamander to people the universe with their superior offspring. The idea that humans and spirits can have intercourse has a long history in magic and folklore, and it frequently vexed the minds of demonologists.²⁹ The story that Adam had intercourse with female demons prior to the creation of Eve, or after the fall, more particularly belongs to the Cabala (where it is commonly associated with the demon Lilith).³⁰ In order to appreciate the extent of Villars' satirical reworking of these two intellectual frames, we should for a moment follow the narrative of the book.

The story in *Le Comte de Gabalis* is told by a persona who presents himself as moderately melancholic and sceptical: 'Common sense having always made me suspect, that there was a great deal of emptiness in all that which they call *Secret Sciences*, I was never tempted to lose so much time, as to turn over the leaves of these books which treat of them'.³¹ This lack of aptitude does not bar him from the company of the

²⁸ This translator has been tentatively identified as John Ozell (by Cynthia Wall in a 1998 edition of the *Rape*). See Latimer, 'Alchemies of Satire' (see above, n. 5), 688.

²⁹ It was customary for demonologists to write on *succubi* and *incubi*. The Franciscan theologian Lodovico Sinistrari (1622–1701), who was a contemporary of Montfaucon de Villars, dedicated a whole treatise to this subject (*De daemonialitate*, posthumously published in 1875), but unlike his predecessors he did not depict his spirits as purely evil but modelled them on Paracelsus's elementals. Sinistrari, *Demoniality* (see above, n. 5), pp. xx, xxv.

³⁰ Cf. the chapter on Lilith in Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York, 1987), pp. 356–61, at p. 357; Raphael Patai, 'Lilith', *The Journal of American Folklore* 77 (1964), 295–314, at 301–02.

³¹ *Gabalais*, trans. Ayres (see above, n. 6), p. 6.

wise since nearly all his friends are given to the study of some secret doctrine or other:

Some of them, were for converse with *Angels*, others with *Devils*, others with their *Genius*, others with *Incubus*'s: Some addicted themselves to the Cure of Diseases, some to Star-gazing, some to the Secrets of Divinity; and almost All, to the *Philosopher's Stone*. They All agreed, that these Grand Secrets, and especially, the *Phylosophers-Stone*, were hardly to be found out; and that but very few do attain to them: But they had all in particular, a very good Opinion of themselves, to believe, that they were of the Number of the *Elect*.³²

The narrator is modest compared to his friends but still delights in their company and even begins a correspondence with the Count of Gabalis, a German Lord who intends to visit his fellow Cabalists in Paris. With such a modest and sceptical disposition, who would have guessed that it is the narrator rather than any of his companions who is singled out by the count for a series of 'entretiens' on the secret sciences? Having studied his new friend's nativity chart, Gabalis is convinced that he can be initiated and welcomed in the company of the Sages. The count promises him that he will learn to command nature ('the Supream Intelligences shall esteem it a Glory, to obey your Desires') and asks him if he has the courage and the strength 'to Renounce all Things, which may be an Obstacle to you, in attaining that Greatness, to which you were Born'.³³ For a moment the narrator fears he will be asked to renounce his baptism, but he is quite relieved to learn that the count refers to sexual intercourse with women. Since he leads a life of abstinence, this seems but a small sacrifice.

In magic, as in religion, abstinence counts as a virtue, and those who embark on some great work or a ritual are always instructed to observe their purity. This is what the reader and also the narrator expect the count to mean, but his exposition on elemental spirits takes a rather unexpected turn when he explains that elementals, having the capacity to assume human form, make excellent spouses. What he actually says is that to learn this secret doctrine, one must renounce women—since elemental spirits make better wives.

³² *Gabalis*, trans. Ayres, p. 8.

³³ *Gabalis*, trans. Ayres, pp. 22–23. Further on, Gabalis again emphasises the narrator's special status: 'You are a Vessel of Election. *Heaven* has ordained you to be the greatest *Cabalist* of your Age. Behold the Scheme of your Nativity, which cannot fail' (p. 39).

Instead of *Women*, whose fading Beauty pass [*sic*] away in a short time, and are followed with horrible Wrinkles and Uglynness, the *Philosophers* enjoy Beauties which never wax old, and whom they have the Glory to make immortal. (...) Renounce the fading Pleasures, which are to be had with *Women*; the Fairest amongst them all, is Loathsom, in respect of the Homeliest *Sylphide*: No Displeasure ever follows our *Sage* Embraces.³⁴

The count refers here to Paracelsus's doctrine that elemental spirits live very long but, unlike man, do not have immortal souls. Hence they seek intercourse with humans to achieve immortality. Or as the count explains: as man allied to God partakes in divinity, so do elementals allied to man partake in immortality. Gabalis criticises the old theologians who mistook the spirits that courted women for angels; for in reality, they were sylphs.³⁵ This passage must have been on Pope's mind when he describes how the sylph Ariel, like 'a Youth more glitt'ring than a *Birth-night Beau*' lays his 'winning lips' at Belinda's ear and speaks of 'airy Elves by Moonlight Shadows seen' and 'Virgins visited by Angel-Pow'rs'. This latter phrase is usually read as a reference to the Annunciation, but in its proper context it is best understood as a concealed reference to the amorous intentions of the sylphs.³⁶ It also fittingly illustrates that Pope borrowed from Villars not only the four categories of the elemental spirits, but also their distinct application as instruments of mockery. Pope must have been particularly charmed by their use as vehicles of sexual innuendo and erotic satire.

It is clear that Villars was satirising a particular brand of esoteric doctrine by developing Paracelsian arguments *ad absurdum*. Yet, his *Gabalis* contains a fair amount of esoteric lore—so much even, that with the accumulation of scholarly references the reader begins to doubt the author's satirical intentions. *The Rape of the Lock* offers little occasion for that type of doubt. Its 'Rosicrucian doctrine' is only loosely modelled on *Gabalis* and Pope takes liberties that would have deprived the count's teachings of their philosophical lure.

A good example is the doctrine of metempsychosis that Pope introduces to explain that elementals are reincarnated belles.

As now your own, our Beings were of old,
And once inclos'd in Woman's beauteous Mold;

³⁴ *Gabalis*, trans. Ayres (see above, n. 6), pp. 36–37.

³⁵ *Gabalis*, trans. Ayres, p. 22. Gabalis refers to the passage in Genesis which tells of the sons of God lusting after the daughters of men (Gen. 6:2) which some have interpreted as the cause of the fall of the angels.

³⁶ *Rape of the Lock* (see above, n. 3), 1.23, 31, 33; cf. also the note to line 33 on p. 148.

Thence, by a soft Transition, we repair
 From earthly Vehicles to these of Air.
 Think not, when Woman's transient Breath is fled,
 That all her Vanities at once are dead:
 Succeeding Vanities she still regards,
 And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the Cards. (1.47–54)³⁷

Though *Gabalís* makes a sharp categorical distinction between earthly women and elemental spirits (which precludes the transition from the one into the other), there is nevertheless one instance where a woman whose transient breath has fled, still overlooks the cards. *Gabalís* explains that the wife of the patriarch Noah, Vesta, who had a liaison with the salamander Oromasis, after her death, became the tutelary Genius of Rome.³⁸ This comes close to the type of transition that Pope speaks of, but in *Gabalís* it is a single, exceptional instance, and more importantly, it is entirely devoid of Pope's ironical foregrounding of woman's vanities. Pope's presentation of the four categories of elemental spirits is entirely determined by female characteristics: fiery termagants, yielding minds, grave prudes, and light coquettes make up the spirits that inhabit the elements of fire, water, earth, and air respectively. Their sexual roles are justified with a reference not to *Gabalís*, but to Milton.

For when the Fair in all their Pride expire,
 To their first Elements their Souls retire:
 The Sprights of fiery Termagants in Flame
 Mount up, and take a Salamander's Name.
 Soft yielding Minds to Water glide away,
 And sip with Nymphs, their Elemental Tea.
 The graver Prude sinks downward to a Gnome,
 In search of Mischief still on Earth to roam.
 The light coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,
 And sport and flutter in the Fields of Air.
 Know farther yet; Whoever fair and chaste
 Rejects Mankind, is by some Sylph embrac'd:
 For Spirits, freed from mortal Laws, with ease
 Assume what Sexes and what Shapes they please. (1.57–70)³⁹

³⁷ *Rape of the Lock* (see above, n. 3), p. 149; cf. the note to line 47 ff. For his doctrine of metempsychosis, Pope may have had Dryden's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* (15,229) in mind.

³⁸ *Gabalís*, trans. Ayres (see above, n. 6), p. 115.

³⁹ *Rape of the Lock* (see above, n. 3), pp. 149–50; lines 69–70 are a paraphrase of *Paradise Lost* 1.423–24: 'For Spirits when they please / Can either sex assume, or both'.

The logic of Paracelsus's doctrine excludes the possibility of metempsychosis since elementals do not have immortal and incorruptible souls, and it is precisely because of this defect that they pursue alliances with humans. Pope's remark (in line 68 above) that whoever rejects mankind will be embraced by a sylph, echoes Villars' text but fails to follow its logic. Pope's spirits embrace out of wantonness in the absence of existential motives.

Gabalís, by contrast, faithfully presents the elementals according to Paracelsus's teachings. 'The *Air* is full of an innumerable Multitude of People having Human Shape'. These are 'Great Lovers of the Sciences, Subtil, Officious to the Sages'. Seas and rivers are inhabited by a people called 'Undians or Nymphs' who have few males, but numerous females and all of them of marvellous beauty. The earth is filled to the centre with 'Gnomes or Pharyes; a People of small Stature; the Guardians of Treasures, of Mines, and of Precious Stones'.⁴⁰ Gnomes, nymphs and sylphs are naturally subservient to man, but the fourth group are an exception. The salamanders of the fire are a separate category since they belong to the most exalted of the elements and live longer than the other elementals. The prelapsarian Adam, newly created by God from the purest elements, was their natural King, but sin corrupted the human frame so that now man must kindle in himself the element of fire to promote his 'igneous nature'. Paracelsus showed the way by discovering through alchemy the 'Solar Powder' that can enable this.⁴¹

There is very little irony or mockery in this learned exposition not only because it follows Paracelsus but also because it provides a vision of an old though by 1670 slightly antiquated model of the cosmic hierarchies. The proper home of the element of fire (and its spirits) is between the air and the sphere of the Moon. The spirits of that region are close to the realm of the Intelligences and hence far exceed humans, especially those who are ignorant and foolish. Befriending salamanders is hence also an exercise in intellectual training. Man's immortal soul makes him eligible for supreme wisdom far exceeding that of the elementals (including the salamanders), but this is achieved only by a few Sages. Salamanders are therefore conducive to human understanding. The lure of intelligence also appeals to the lower elementals so that next to immortality, they also seek knowledge. The count explains that the sylphs occasionally visit

⁴⁰ *Gabalís*, trans. Ayres (see above, n. 6), pp. 27–29.

⁴¹ *Gabalís*, trans. Ayres, pp. 45–46.

learned men to consult them about the 'Books of Averroes, which they do not well understand'. Being sublunar creatures, without a mind capable of grasping Aristotelian metaphysics, they are nevertheless eager to be instructed by man. 'All these Elementary Spirits are our Disciples; for they are most Happy, when we will stoop so low, as to Instruct them'.⁴²

Perhaps Villars felt that he was too much carried away by Paracelsian philosophy so that he lost track of his satirical tone. Therefore, at the end of the second discourse he has the count explain that a true Sage can survive without sustenance. He even gives a recipe: apply some earth to your navel, keep it moist at all times, and you can last six months without food—after which the count and the narrator stroll to a village to have dinner.⁴³

The third discourse is dedicated to the question of oracles and shows no traces of satire. The Count of Gabalis argues firmly against a group of philosophers that he calls atheists and libertines (Pomponazzi is one of them) because they are inclined to discredit oracles and provide purely naturalistic explanations for their emergence. The narrator, who frequently opposes and contradicts the arguments of the count, is now deeply impressed by his solid reasoning. On the authority of Platonists and Pythagoreans, Gabalis argues for the existence of a middle group of spirits between man and angel. 'The Hebrews called these substances which are between an Angel and a Man, *Sadaim*; and the Greeks transposing the Sillables, and adding two Letters, called them *Daimonas*'.⁴⁴ The count, of course, conflates them with elementals and by securing for them a place in a time-honoured neoplatonic spiritual hierarchy can give them genuine philosophical legitimacy. As driving forces behind the oracles, the elementals provide mankind with good counsel and moral instruction. Again, the salamanders take pride of place.

Pope also makes use of a classical hierarchy to depict his machinery, but he does not derive it from *Le Comte de Gabalis*. Instead, his inspiration is distinctly Miltonic. While Gabalis speaks of 'the volent Republique of the Sylphs', Pope prefers to speak of 'the light Militia of the lower sky',⁴⁵ a military perception that matches well with Milton's depiction of Satan as he organises his band of rebel angels into an army. Likewise the speech

⁴² *Gabalis*, trans. Ayres (see above, n. 6), pp. 14–15.

⁴³ *Gabalis*, trans. Ayres, p. 60.

⁴⁴ *Gabalis*, trans. Ayres, p. 92.

⁴⁵ *Gabalis*, trans. Ayres (see above, n. 6), p. 48; *Le Comte de Gabalis* (see above, n. 3), p. 85, reads 'la republique volante des Sylphes'; *Rape of the Lock* (see above, n. 3), 1.42.

that Ariel, sensing danger for Belinda, addresses to his minions, echoes the speech of Satan rallying his troops.

Ye *Sylphs and Sylphids*, to your Chief give Ear,
Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Daemons hear!
 Ye know the Spheres and various Tasks assign'd,
 By Laws Eternal, to th' Aerial Kind.
 Some in the Fields of purest Aether play,
 And bask and whiten in the Blaze of Day.
 Some guide the Course of wandring Orbs on high,
 Or roll the Planets thro' the boundless Sky.
 Some less refin'd, beneath the Moon's pale Light
 Pursue the Stars that shoot athwart the Night,
 Or suck the Mists in grosser Air below,
 Or dip their Pinions in the painted Bow,
 Or brew fierce Tempests on the wintry Main,
 Or o'er the Glebe distill the kindly Rain. (2.73–86)

The offices and tasks attributed to the spirits in this speech are again closer to Milton than to *Gabalís*. Since elemental spirits are by definition sublunar, guiding the course of wandering orbs and rolling the planets through the sky belong properly to the offices of the angels.⁴⁶ Unrestrained by the demands of the old hierarchy, Pope takes considerable liberties in conflating angels and elemental spirits, in spite of the fact that he is still aware of the distinction between the sublunar and supralunar region. The respect that Villars shows for the older world picture as he relies on a traditional metaphysics to refute the arguments of modern sceptics and atheists, is absent in Pope.

There is one final element in Pope's machinery that, since it clearly derives from *Gabalís*, deserves our attention. Belinda's attendant spirit Ariel is depicted as having a close and intimate relation with his mistress. He can see what feelings and thoughts arise in her heart and mind, and he is utterly defeated when he discovers that she harbours feelings for an 'earthly lover'.

Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought
 The close Recesses of the Virgin's Thought;
 As on the Nosegay in her Breast reclin'd,
 He watch'd th' Ideas rising in her Mind,
 Sudden he view'd, in spite of all her Art,
 An Earthly Lover lurking at her Heart.

⁴⁶ See the quotation from *Paradise Lost* 10.668 in note 4 above.

Amaz'd, confus'd, he found his Pow'r expir'd,
Resign'd to Fate, and with a Sigh retir'd. (3.139–46)

Thus we are lead to infer that Ariel pictured himself as Belinda's lover.

Le Comte de Gabalis contains numerous instances of spirit lovers but one story is particularly telling. Villars derives from Paracelsus the story of a philosopher from Stauffenberg who betrays his spirit lover by falling in love with a woman. The jealous nymph has her revenge by giving the man a sign during a dinner party and then striking him dead.

As he was at Dinner with his new Mistriss and some Friends, they saw in the Air one of the lovliest Thighs and Legs that could be imagined: The Invisible Lover was willing to shew it to the Friends of her Disloyal Servant, to the end they might judge how much he was in the wrong, to prefer a Woman to her. After which, the enraged Nymph killed him on the spot.⁴⁷

The story of the nymph flaunting her charms before striking a fatal blow is witty and seems to suggest that Villars is reviving his satirical tone. However, this is not the case; the story is literally copied from Paracelsus and goes back to a fifteenth-century legend: *Die Geschichte vom Ritter Peter Diemringer vom Stauffenberg* from 1483. In that version of the tale also a leg appears as a mysterious sign.⁴⁸ Not all wit in *Gabalis* can be construed as satire.

This being said, there is an amusing passage in the fifth discourse of *Gabalis* that is difficult to read without the awareness that the author is being deliberately ironical. Throughout the book the sceptical narrator continues to cast doubts on the words of the count, but his counter-arguments in the end rely more on theological prejudice than on pure reason. He persistently expresses his fear that the elementals are demons

⁴⁷ *Gabalis*, trans. Lovell (see above, n. 6), p. 84. *Gabalis*, ed. Laufer (see above, n. 6), p. 113: 'comme il dinoit avec sa nouvelle Maîtresse & quelques-uns de ses amis, on vit en l'air la plus belle cuisse du monde; l'amante invisible voulut bien la faire voir aux amis de son infidelle, afin qu'ils jugeassent du tort qu'il avoit de luy preferer une femme. Apres quoy la Nymphe indignée le fit mourir sur l'heure'. I have cited the translation by Lovell, since Ayres seems to have missed the point of the leg. *Gabalis*, trans. Ayres (see above, n. 6), pp. 121–22: 'But as he Dined with his new Mistress, and certain of his Friends, there was seen in the Air, the Loveliest Creature of the World; which was the Invisible Lover, that had a mind to let her self be seen by the Friends of her unfaithful Gallant; that they might Judg how little reason he could have, to prefer a Woman before her. After which the enraged Nymph struck him dead immediately'.

⁴⁸ *Gabalis*, ed. Laufer (see above, n. 6), p. 172, provides some lines from the text: 'Eines menschen füß es sehen lies / Bloss im sal biss an die knie / Off erden ward kein schöner nie / Noch wunnischlicher fües gesehen'.

in disguise. This is a common enough prejudice, the count explains, and one that has urged elementals in their dealings with humans to assume the appearance of animals.

... and so accommodate themselves to the whimsical weakness of Women, who would have a lovely Sylph in Horrour, and are not startled at a Dog or Monkey. I could tell you many little stories of the Ladies Lap-dogs, with some Virgins in the World.⁴⁹

Given that the elementals for the sake of immortality are keen on conjugal relations, the reader can imagine what little stories the count had in mind. This puts Shock, Belinda's lap-dog in *The Rape of the Lock*, in a somewhat different light. In the 1712-version of the poem, his role is more or less limited to the morning omens that foretold the disaster of that day: 'Poll sate mute, and Shock was most Unkind!'⁵⁰ This reference to his 'unkindness' remains unaltered in the 1714-version, but its *doubles entredres* receive additional emphasis, when Pope has Ariel impart a dream to Belinda and then adds a line in which Shock 'wak'd his Mistress with his Tongue'.⁵¹ One would go too far to suggest that Shock originated in the above-quoted passage from *Gabalís*, but Pope made subtle use of it when he expanded his *Lock*.

The wit that one finds scattered throughout the *Comte de Gabalis* does not succeed in casting a veil of irony over the doctrines that dominate the final sections of the book of which the most important are expounded in the fourth discourse. Gabalis explains that the purpose of marrying sylphs is twofold; firstly, it is to immortalise them, and secondly, it is to have children by them in order to people the air with 'philosophical families'. Adam's sin was not literally eating of the forbidden fruit, but having intercourse with Eve. The result of that intercourse is imperfect humans and mortal monsters. God had not intended man to procreate in that way, since Adam had originally been destined to father heroes and giants with elemental spirits. The Deluge was sent by God as punishment for the evil offspring of carnal procreation, and the Sons of God that visited the daughters of man to beget Giants simply did what was right and proper. Chief among these Sons of God was the salamander Oromasis (i.e. Ahura Mazda) who became the gallant of Vesta, the wife of Noah, and fathered

⁴⁹ *Gabalís*, trans. Lovell (see above, n. 6), p. 109.

⁵⁰ *Rape of the Lock* (see above, n. 3), 2.81, p. 134.

⁵¹ *Rape of the Lock*, 1.116, p. 153.

a son with her, who in Scripture is known as Japhet, but otherwise goes by the name of Zoroaster.

This Cabalistic mythology is for the greater part an invention of Montfaucon de Villars (though it seems to be based on some authentic sources)⁵² to make the reader aware of the fact that elemental spirits are not simply otherworldly creatures, but are profoundly interwoven with the history and genealogy of mankind. Elemental spirits are among us, is his message and he thereby stirs people's imagination in much the same way as stories of UFO's and alien invasions would do in the twentieth century. It is therefore easy to understand why these ideas were popular and attractive for readers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The single most important source for these ideas on elemental spirits is a treatise by Paracelsus, perhaps not as spectacular as the book by Villars but certainly as influential: *Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis et salamandris et de caeteris spiritibus*.⁵³ This text was not an immediate source for Pope but he must have been aware of its existence. From it derive the four categories of elemental spirits, the salamanders, nymphs, sylphs and gnomes (that are referred to by Paracelsus as *pygmaei* and *gnomi*). Paracelsus describes these creatures as human-like, with bodies of flesh and blood, with a digestive system and procreative faculties. Yet they resemble spirits because their bodies have a more subtle composition so that they can move through walls and solid objects and can develop great speed. Like humans they can talk, laugh and think, but they do not have a soul. Hence they die like animals, even though they are *longaevi* and can become centuries old.

The four classes of elemental spirits do not intermingle. The sylphs of the air stay clear of the element fire because it would make them highly combustible. The gnomes or pygmies are small, and live in mountains or subterranean caverns. The nymphs or undines live in the water and resemble humans both in appearance and speech. Of all the elemental groups they are most inclined to associate with humans since intermarriage will

⁵² Roger Laufer (see above, n. 6) found it difficult to find actual sources. On the echoes from Jewish Cabala, see n. 30 above.

⁵³ The treatise, originally written in German and later rendered into Latin, was published posthumously in 1566. See *Neundter Theil der Bücher und Schriften des Edlen-Hochgelehrten und Bewehrten Philosophi Medici Philippi Theophrasti Bombast von Hohenheim Paracelsi genannt*, ed. Johannes Huser (Basel, 1690; facs. reprint Hildesheim, 1972), pp. 45–78; *A Book on Nymphs, Sylphs, Pygmies, and Salamanders, and on the Other Spirits*, trans. Henry E. Sigerist, in *Four Treatises of Theophrastus von Hohenheim called Paracelsus*, trans. C. Lilian Temkin, George Rosen, Gregory Zilboorg, Henry E. Sigerist (Baltimore, 1941), pp. 213–53.

not only procure immortal souls for their offspring but also for themselves. The spirits of the earth are less keen on interbreeding and only rarely associate themselves with man. The sylphs who live in the air are larger and coarser than humans, and salamanders, finally, are tall and lean, with a fiery countenance. They dwell in volcanoes and mines and prefer silence over speaking. It is dangerous to associate oneself with them since they can easily be possessed by demons. Paracelsus is conspicuously cautious where salamanders are concerned, unlike Villars, who depicts them as superior beings.

From a scientific and philosophical perspective Paracelsus's *De nymphis* forwarded two important innovative theses. First of all, it represented elemental spirits as non-demonic creatures, making them morally neutral. Since all sublunar spirits were commonly looked upon with a fair dose of suspicion as imperfect or fallen and were quickly identified as demons, Paracelsus's neutral elementals constituted a serious challenge to standard theology. Secondly, Paracelsus gave to his spirits a proper place in the order of nature and the world of physics, and thereby dissociated them from the unifying and ontological systems of which they had previously been a part. Elemental spirits were known in the western intellectual tradition ever since antiquity, but they had always been part of a great chain of being and were consequently looked upon as stumbling blocks or impediments in the progress of the human soul.⁵⁴ Paracelsus is known as one of the Renaissance innovators of scientific method because he propagated empirical and experimental research. His treatise *De nymphis* should be seen in that light. He gave to the spirits of nature an independent place in the order of things, like a biologist who draws up a taxonomy of species. His approach was unmistakably innovative since he liberated the spirits from a centuries-old demonic stigma. Sadly, it had only one serious flaw; the existence of these elemental spirits could never be empirically established.

Montfaucon de Villars and Alexander Pope are deeply indebted to Paracelsus, the former in a direct and the latter in an indirect way. Villars elaborated the Paracelsian vision through a Cabalistic mythology of pneumanthropic eugenics; Pope brought it to life in sparkling verse. It is clear

⁵⁴ This was usually the case in neoplatonic systems of thought. A good example of their inferior status can be found in the work of Iamblichus. See Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (Pennsylvania, 1995), pp. 40–41.

that as a science Paracelsus's doctrine of elemental spirits had no future so that one is automatically forced to study the reception and development of these ideas in terms of the decline of traditional metaphysics. This brings us back to the friction between doctrine and irony, between secret science and poetry, that pervades the works by Pope and Villars. In the following, concluding paragraphs, we will rehearse the main points of our discussion.

Upon publication, *Le Comte de Gabalis*, by virtue of its wealth of ideas and subtle ironies, attracted enlightened and esoterically minded readers alike. Its English translators Archibald Lovell and Philip Ayres mistook it for a serious doctrinal work,⁵⁵ an opinion also expressed by Alexander Pope in his dedicatory epistle to Arabella Fermor. English attitudes at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century were probably influenced by the Rosicrucian works of John Heydon⁵⁶ to such an extent that it blunted readers' sensibility to Montfaucon de Villars' ironies. Yet, in the case of Pope it is difficult to imagine that he should have been insensitive to his source's satirical and even farcical representation of elemental spirits assuming the guise of lap-dogs, when he made Shock leap on the bed and lick Belinda's face. By the same token, it is not at all certain whether Montfaucon de Villars was not in some way catering for the tastes of the esoterically minded, his 'Messieurs les Curieux', by

⁵⁵ Despite his censorious attitude towards Ayres's invective, Lovell also believed the author was a serious devotee of Cabalism. He refers to Montfaucon de Villars as 'an Author, who, in his sense does rather countenance than confute the Secret Sciences' (*Gabalis*, trans. Lovell [see above, n. 6], sig. Azv).

⁵⁶ John Heydon (b. 1629) published numerous magical works to which he liberally applied the label 'Rosicrucian': *A New Method of Rosie Crucian Physick* (London, 1658), *The Rosie Crucian Infallible Axiomata* (London, 1660), *The Wise-Man's Crown, or, the Glory of the Rosie-Cross* (London, 1664), *Theomagia, or the Temple of Wisdome* (London, 1664), *Psonthonphanchia: Being a Word in Season to the Enemies of Christians* (London, 1664), and *Elhavarevna or the English Physitians Tutor in the Astrobolisms of Mettals Rosie Cruican* [sic] (London, 1665). All titles are available through EEBO. In *Theomagia*, his *opus magnum*, Heydon deals with 'Rosie Crucian secrets Spiritual, Coelestial and Elemental' (sig. A4r). He devotes several chapters to the four elements and their properties (Book 1, ch. 17, pp. 61 ff.), but he does not attribute to them groups of Paracelsian elemental spirits. Instead, he lists seven rulers of the earth (Barzabel, Taphthartharath, Hasmodai, Kedemel, Sorath, Hismael and Zazel) and twelve attendant *Genii* who control nature and hold sway over the four elements (cf. Book 1, ch. 5, pp. 11 ff.). At the end of *Psonthonphanchia*, Heydon briefly discusses fairy rings. His main purpose is to deal with nature spirits as secondary causes, and unlike Paracelsus he takes little interest in fairies as creatures in their own right or in the folklore surrounding them. He wonders 'whether [the Fairy Circles] be the *Rendezvous* of Witches or the dancing places of those little Puppet-Spirits which they call *Elves* or *Fairies*. But these curiosities I leave to more busie wits' (Book 2, p. 164).

presenting to them some of the major philosophical issues of his day, such as the questions regarding the truth of oracles, the souls of animals, or the doctrines of Averroes and Zoroaster. For a man, a fugitive even, who had been condemned for arson and putting a torch to the château of the Chevalier de Montgaillard, Villars did rather frequently refer to salamanders in his book, propagating the cultivation of man's 'igneous' nature. Villars loved to play with fire, and it is difficult to imagine he did not incense the mind of Pope.

Le Comte de Gabalis is a more philosophical work than *The Rape of the Lock*, but because Pope espoused the work as a Rosicrucian textbook and thereby helped to immortalise it, the mock heroic poem did become (however unintentionally) the vehicle of Paracelsian spirit lore. The moment one is aware of this, it is difficult not to sense the impact of enlightened wit in its depiction of supernatural agency. As for his religion, Pope was and remained a Catholic to the extent that he did not seek preferment by converting to the established church, yet his beliefs seem to have been less committed to historical tradition than to a more abstract form of theism.⁵⁷ Traditional metaphysics would not have been sacrosanct to him and though the mock epic may have succeeded in laughing the Fermers and the Petres together again, it also contributed to alienating enlightened minds from the worlds of Miltonic angels and Paracelsian spirits. Paracelsus's original project of giving elemental spirits a proper place in the order of nature by dissociating them from a larger metaphysical context, received little support from Villars who enlarged their role as potential lovers into the absurd, and was further annulled by Pope who with a liberal hand conflated angels and elementals.

Pope may have referred to *Gabalis* as a Rosicrucian textbook in jest, but his remark did brand the work as a book of doctrine. An esoterically minded reader, amused by Pope's wit, could derive from this an encouragement to study secret doctrine in Villars' book. An enlightened mind would likewise be encouraged to read the work, to spice his mirth with derision. Thus, both sceptics and believers were tempted to read *Gabalis* not as a literary satire but as a work of philosophy.

⁵⁷ Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: A Life* (New Haven, 1985), pp. 26–27, argues that Pope 'was to remain all his life a theist and probably, in some way not very sharply defined even to himself, a Christian'.

Pope contributed to this mystification surrounding *Gabalís*, but also his own work was not free from such ambiguities. For modern as well as contemporary readers the *Rape* is a work between jest and earnest. Some critics have pointed out that *The Rape of the Lock* was written in a period when Jacobites, who saw their position imperilled by the Act of Settlement which debarred Catholics from succeeding to the English throne, actively reflected on their loyalties. The rape of a lock could be construed as the rape of a kingdom (Belinda would then stand for James II). Queen Anne (James II's second daughter) was a High Church Tory and her reign was favourable to Catholic minorities. Pope refers to her in the third canto of his poem: in Hampton Court 'Thou, Great Anna! whom three Realms obey, Dost sometimes Counsel take—and sometimes Tea'.⁵⁸ Her death in 1714, and the succession of the House of Hanover, was a blow to Jacobite interests and provoked political reorientations. Pope may have expressed sympathies in *The Rape of the Lock* that he tried to depoliticise after Queen Anne's death.

Not long after the enlarged edition of the *Lock* and the third English translation of *Gabalís*, Pope published a pamphlet under the name Esdras Barnivelt, Apothecary, called *A Key to the Lock, or, A Treatise proving, beyond all Contradiction, the dangerous Tendency of a late Poem, Entitled, The Rape of the Lock, to Government and Religion*. A dedicatory acrostic by a Mr. 'N. Castleton' at the beginning of the pamphlet explains that Barnivelt is an anagram of 'Unbarel it'.⁵⁹ Lines like 'Barrels conceal the Liquor they contain, And Sculls are but the Barrels of the Brain' indicate that the accusations the pamphlet makes should be imbibed with a pinch of salt. Barnivelt, however, is very serious in his accusations. He warns his readers that *The Rape of the Lock* is a 'Popish' text. In a political sense the lock stands for the Barrier Treaty and its 'rape' for the dissolution of the barrier against Catholic aggression. Historically, the Barrier Treaty refers to a series of three treaties (1709, 1713, 1715) whereby the Dutch guaranteed Protestant succession in England in favour of the House of Hanover in exchange for English support in creating a barrier to protect the United

⁵⁸ *Rape of the Lock* (see above, n. 3), 3.7–8.

⁵⁹ The first edition of *A Key to the Lock* appeared in April 1715. References above are to the third edition: *A Key to the Lock* (London, 1718), available through EEBO; the acrostic by Castleton is on p. 5. On the political dimension of the *Rape* and the *Key* as discussed in these paragraphs, see Howard Erskine-Hill, 'Literature and the Jacobite Cause', *Modern Language Studies* 9 (1979), 15–28, at 19–20; and *idem*, 'Alexander Pope: The Political Poet in His Time', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 15 (1981), 123–48, at 130–34.

Provinces from Franco-Hispanic (i.e. Catholic) aggression. Barnivelt's decoding of the *Rape* is ingenious to such an extent that no contemporary reader would have taken it seriously. The modern reader is thereby persuaded to believe that Barnivelt's main purpose is to depoliticise the *Rape* and deflect the reader's attention from political sentiments that were on the poet's mind at the time of composition.

If this is indeed the case,⁶⁰ a similar argument might be construed for the alleged danger to religion that the poem constitutes. In a theological sense, the elementals are seen by Barnivelt as the guardian angels and patron saints of Popish superstition; the toilette becomes the Roman Mass, and Belinda the Whore of Babylon. The reader who has just admired and discarded the ridiculous ingenuity of Barnivelt in his political reading, is inclined to do the same with his theological reading, thus supposing the poem is neither political nor religious. If we can argue that Barnivelt serves as a decoy for Pope's political sentiments, we can also argue that he is used to cover up Pope's religious (or rather, metaphysical) ideas. *The Rape of the Lock* is obviously not a poem promoting the break-down of the barrier against Catholic aggression, but it can be read as a poem about loyalties to one of the crowned monarchs of Britain. The *Rape* is clearly not aimed at the promotion of Popish superstitions regarding saints and angels, but it can be read as a poem with critical views on supernatural agency. By writing the *Key to the Lock* Pope has done us the service of pointing out to us two important heuristics for understanding the poem: politics and religion.

The elemental spirits could not retain the place in the natural sciences that Paracelsus had reserved for them. Yet, they thrived in literature (first and foremost in Pope's mock epic) and continued to do so for the centuries that followed. Paracelsus's spirits proved resilient and at the beginning of the twentieth century they returned in the doctrines of esoteric Christendom. The German theosophist Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) devoted a number of lectures to the elementals in 1908 and 1909 (some years later he would break with the theosophists and found his own anthroposophical movement). In line with classical neoplatonism he would look upon the spirits of nature as the tools with which higher intelligences create the natural world. Inversely, also man can ennoble himself through commerce with elemental spirits to free himself from material constraints.

⁶⁰ This point is sensibly argued by Erskine-Hill (see previous note), but I shall not elaborate his arguments in this article.

Similar ideas soon surfaced in other quarters. Max Heindel in his *Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* reserved a modest place for the nature spirits in the ongoing process of creation. Elementals become assistants in helping man to build his body on his way to becoming a Creative Intelligence.⁶¹ Paracelsus would have been pleased to know that his spirits ended up as agents in a cosmic evolution, though it is not the scientific one that he would have preferred.

⁶¹ Rudolf Steiner, 'Gnomes, Undines, Sylphs and Salamanders' (1908), in R. Steiner, *Nature Spirits: Selected Lectures* (Forest Row, 2007), pp. 60–76; Rudolf Steiner, 'The Four Elements, Fire, and the Elemental Beings: the Lowest Realm of the Hierarchies' (1909), in R. Steiner, *The Spiritual Hierarchies and the Physical World: Zodiac, Planets and Cosmos* (Great Barrington, Mass., 2008), pp. 17–30; Max Heindel, *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception or Mystic Christianity* (London, 1925), p. 26.

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